

BRITISH INDIA'S FIRST FREEDOM MOVEMENT.
1820-1830

by
SUBARNA GHOSH
ASOKLAL GHOSH



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PREFACE

History has ceased to be what it was in our grandfathers' time. It is now treated as a science subject and is scientifically written. The difference is well known and the gain is widely appreciated. We have raised this point just to put in that this book, which is about the political aspirations and strivings of India of the 1820s, is not history as per the current specification. It is a chronicle of events, with a prayer that historians kindly take into account certain developments of the period and give us history. What we have got from them so far appears not to have taken into account certain developments which are of political significance.

It is, we claim, a reasonable prayer. For, whether to get wheat meal out of wheat we use electrically operated grinders of the latest design or just a pre-historical mortar and pestle arrangement, one thing is essential, — wheat must be put into the grinder. That operation left unattended, grinders even of to-morrow's design will be of no avail.

Likewise, we believe, even the highest degree of scientific treatment of any subject will be of little use if available relevant data are not all taken into account. For example, we cannot but go wrong in our understanding of the political aspirations and strivings of India of the 1820s if we do not keep in view: (a) that in 1820-24 unidentified Indians raised the cry: Murder your European tyrants; (b) that in 1821-23 identified Indians proclaimed: India murdered her kings whenever they misbehaved; (c) that in 1822-23 those identified Indians were accused by the Government of carrying on subversive propaganda all over the country; (d) that in 1824-25 widespread armed risings occurred in the country; (e) that in 1824 sepoy concentrations around Calcutta got restive, and when invited to discussions demanded that certain army officers be first hanged or surrendered to them, — the Commander-in-chief agreed to keep hostages with the rebels; (f) that in 1825 certain Calcuttans, referring to the corrective measures taken against the rebel sepoys, openly called the sitting Governor-General a liar, a tyrant and

a murderer, and proposed that he be deprived of his policy making powers ; (g) that in 1826 certain London friends of those Calcutta politicians started canvassing the cause of the rebel sepoys ; (h) that in 1827 certain local Europeans acting under the leadership of identified Indians, raised the cry : No taxation without representation ; (i) that in 1826-28 those Europeans violated the Indian Press Regulation of the time to the extent of questioning the right and power of the British Parliament itself ; (j) that in 1827 Indians and Europeans jointly convened public meetings to examine the extent of the Governor-General's power ; (k) that soon after hundreds of Indians and Europeans, assembled at a public meeting, formally resolved to get curtailed the law making powers of the Governor-General ; (l) that Lord Bentinck, on reporting his troubles to London, was advised by his superiors to gag the local Press and to play strong with the trouble-makers ; (m) that Lord Bentinck pleaded his helplessness *vis-a-vis* the Press, and, to meet the situation, he invited suggestions from those very trouble-makers.

We have in this book brought into focus all the above-cited developments and several others,—in each and every case supported by 1820-35 records. Not even one of these developments has ever been used in the 'scientifically written' studies of the period so far produced. Can we dare contend that any of these studies, no matter what the technique used, can give us correct readings ?

In Part II we propose (a) to show how Lord Bentinck more than retrieved his and his administration's position *vis-a-vis* the agitators for political rights and (b) to put into the grinders several other hitherto unnoticed developments of his time. Of those developments one is of relevance to both Part I and Part II. It appears that, with his position strengthened and the agitation de-fused, Lord Bentinck launched his great programme of producing a committed band of educators, journalists, historians in his bid to make India a wonderland, which not only preferred subjection to freedom but also boasted of this preference.

It was an uphill task. For, according to contemporary witnesses, usually considered reliable and made use of by historians, India of this period presented a picture altogether different, — millions of her people got excited with hopes of immediate liberation ; hundreds of thousands of them actually risked their everything to harass the conquerors and to murder the stooges and the beneficiaries of the new regime,—in cold blood and to the applause of their viewers.

To parade a country with such a record as one which preferred subjection to freedom, is a near impossibility. But then 'where there is a will', say the British, 'there is a way'. Lord Bentinck had the will and he found a way. Using both carrots and guns he put in operation a brain washing machine, which in its effectiveness stands yet unsurpassed.

Bentinck's educational programme is said to have aimed at giving India all that was good in Western learning. It would be truer to say that his programme aimed at *not* giving India knowledge of anything that was good in her past or present, and particularly not giving her knowledge of any longing ever evinced by her people for freedom, or of any striving ever made by them to drive the foreign conquerors out. Thousands of pages were written to interpret India of the 1820s. There is nowhere in them a single mention of any of the developments cited above. What we get, we get in odd places.

That was on the negative side, what was withheld from everybody. There was a positive side also, what was hammered into everybody. We got, for example, Indians were selfish, unscrupulous, devoid of any moral or social or national sense, and so it would be a calamity to themselves if by any chance they succeeded in driving out the British. We got at the same time that the wise and the honest amongst the natives had the same conviction and acted accordingly, while the common people, remembering what they had suffered in pre-British days, were thankful that those days were gone for ever. And so emerged the consensus we are all familiar with.

We are perhaps the first to challenge this consensus. Our challenge is not on philosophical grounds, that good government is no substitute for self government. Our challenge is on the ground that, in arriving at the above consensus, certain relevant developments of the time had been deliberately kept papered over.

We know our handicaps. We sound incredible. It is only because Bentincks were mortals and perfection is not given unto mortals, that we have been able to make this appearance. Sometimes they made slips. Sometimes they quarrelled amongst themselves and leaked out unpleasants. While incriminatory evidences were suppressed, sometimes the orders to suppress them got recorded. Some of the very learned amongst the interpreters were also very ignorant, they left tell-tale marks untreated. Some had acted nobly, bravely in ugly situations ; their friends would not forego the pleasure of recalling those ugly situations. Some of them made startling discoveries and wanted to be noticed and appreciated. And, above all, they were active politicians ; they had not only to talk but also to act, and their action sometimes fouled with their words ; and the fouling could not be effaced. Macaulay, for example, certified that Bentinck had "infused into oriental despotism the spirit of British freedom" ; he could not obliterate the action which showed that Bentinck had murdered the law and had made that spirit of freedom a mockery.

To the general body of our readers, our appeal : Judge not on the basis of what you have already been told, take also into account what has been, till now, withheld from you. To historians amongst them, our prayer : Check our evidences ; take into account only those developments which pass your scrutiny, and then give us history as per the latest specification.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study could have been undertaken more than a century earlier, but was not. Because those in authority at the time were told by their leaders, some of them *historians* :

"Stop your [Inquiry] Commission instantly. Inquire no further. You are sitting upon gunpowder. It is your fate to be there. And you will incur less danger in remaining where you are than in publishing what will spread far and wide the disloyalty of your army."¹

This and similar other injunctions, voiced in the 1820s, remained more or less operative for a long time,² during which any discussion which "dangerously excited the feelings of natives and tended to lower the character and reputation of the local government" was frowned upon. Historians of the time also were alive to the risk and played their part accordingly.

Historians coming later have overlooked it, probably because they had to take, in each stride, not years but decades, if not longer periods. And so, questions like the following have remained not only un-answered, but also un-asked.

Who sounded the call : "Your European tyrants are few in number ; murder them" ?

Who conspired to kill all the Whites at Barrackpur ? What led the Calcutta Europeans to send their wives to the Fort for protection ?

Who raised the shouts in Delhi : "Company ka raj ho gya" ? Who spread the rumour in Central India that the Company was packing up ?

Who told a Commander-in-Chief : If you want us to negotiate, hang some of your officers ? What made the Commander-in-Chief to offer hostages, though he did not hang any ?

What led the British Governors and Commanders to whisper : "All India is looking out for our downfall" ?

Who raised the slogan : "No taxation without representation" ? Who added : Not even "for the defence of the realm." ?

Who demanded control over the purse ? Who suggested election of Governors and Governors General ?

Who proposed people's militia for external, and native agencies for internal, peace ?

Who talked of "Insurrections if the warnings were not heeded" ?

Who appealed to the Army of Bengal : When insurrections occur, "follow the example of the Army of [Revolutionary] France" ?

Who said : North Americans have left the Empire, so shall we do ?

Who put in : "Let not England say later, she had no warning" ?

What made the Press circulate these audacities ? What led Governor General Bentinck to negotiate with those very people who circulated such audacities ?

How is it that nobody has ever raised these questions ?

We tried to find answers to these questions. And since our histories do not provide any clue, we had to go to the 1820 records for our guidance. We did not get all the answers. But we got many. The answers we got have been set forth in this monograph.

Taken jointly, these answers suggest that against a background of armed attempts and threats of further attempts of that kind, a Calcutta group of politicians had mounted an agitation for securing political rights amounting to self government. The chief weapon in their hands was non-cooperation including non-payment of taxes, at a time when the government was suffering from unbalanced budgets and at a time when for various reasons it could not afford taking effective repressive measures. The Government of Lord William Cavendish Bentinck opted for coming to terms with the lesser evil. He conceded (or promised to concede) political rights in his bid to retain trading and similar other privileges, and of course the dividend of his employers.

Our submission is contrary not only to uninformed popular beliefs but also to well informed historical studies based on established evidences. We have ventured to publish our views only because certain evidences appear not to have been taken into account by any of our predecessors dealing with the 1820s of India's history, and it is therefore within the limits of possibility that we may be right

even though our findings are at variance with all past assessments.

We start with giving a list of left-out evidences. Those are in two categories,—(a) evidences deliberately suppressed; (b) evidences ignored by, or till now unknown to, those dealing with the concerned period. The list given below is not exhaustive.

1. *Brief remarks regarding modern encroachments on the ancient rights of females*,—a pamphlet published by Rammohun Roy and his friends in 1821-22 and republished in 1826.³ According to the very first sentence of this pamphlet published for free distribution, India in her Golden Age had a constitutional form of government and she then enjoyed hundreds of years of peace and harmony, and whenever her rulers turned despots, Indians killed them.—The political significance of such an assertion made and circulated freely in a country then under the despotic rule of a foreign power, is more than obvious. Yet nobody has ever taken any notice of this assertion in evaluating the political ideas of the concerned people, even though thousands of historians and biographers have consulted the pamphlet in which it was publicised.

2. A study of the awakening of political consciousness amongst Indians,—a report submitted by Secretary W. B. Bayley of the Bengal Government in October 1822, and another prepared by John Adam, the seniormost member of the Governor General's Council of the time.⁴ According to Bayley, the political propaganda of Rammohun Roy and his friends had been causing trouble in many and distant parts of India and the local administrators had been asking the Supreme Government to put an end to those propaganda activities.—The importance of these reports also is obvious in the same context. But till now these reports have found mention in books on the history of Indian journalism only.

3. The Report of Inquiry on the Barrackpur Mutiny of

1824.—This report was sent in a secret communication to the Court of Directors who refused to make its contents known to the general body of Proprietors.⁵ It was suppressed, (probably destroyed, for, though it must have been the most important single document on the subject, nobody has till now made use of it when discussing the 1824 mutiny, not even before branding Governor General Amherst or Board of Control President Wynn as liars.⁶)

4. The proceedings of the Court of Proprietors of the East India Company, July 1824.⁷ The 9th and 23rd July 1824 meetings were special ones requisitioned by the London supporters of the Calcutta programme of awakening political consciousness amongst Indians ; one of the principal documents on which the discussions were based was Rammohun Roy's protest against the Press Regulation of 1823. The importance of these discussions to an understanding of the Calcutta programme of awakening political consciousness is more than obvious. It was at one of these meetings that John Malcolm, a Proprietor of the East India Company, told his brother Proprietors that Indians were then waging a systematic campaign to rouse anti-British feelings in the country ; he said, it would therefore be most injudicious to give India a Free Press. No study of the period has so far made any use of these proceedings.

5. The proceedings of the above Court of Proprietors for the years 1826-27.⁸ These proceedings hold before us an unbelievable phenomenon, that of a group of British politicians espousing the cause of Indian sepoys who had mutinied against their British rulers. And they were the same people who had, in 1820-22, run the Calcutta programme of awakening political consciousness and, in 1823-24, tried to get the Press Regulation repealed.

6. The files of the *Bengal Chronicle*, the *Calcutta Chronicle*, and the *Bengal Hurkaru* (Calcutta) and of the *Asiatic Journal* and the *Oriental Herald* (London) for

1827-28.⁹ These contain hundreds of pages of running commentary on a No-tax Campaign culminating in a show-down case before the Supreme Court in which the Government lost to the campaigners. More or less the same group,—which in 1820-22 had initiated the Calcutta programme of awakening political consciousness amongst Indians, and in 1823-24 had tried to get the Press Regulation repealed, and in 1826-27 had espoused the cause of the Indian mutineers,—sponsored the No-tax Campaign of 1827-28. The importance of the evidence of these files is more than obvious. Yet little use has so far been made of them, though reference has often been made to government measures taken against some of the papers.

7. The Governor General—Court of Directors correspondence, 1827-28. According to the proceedings of the Court of Proprietors for this period, a part of this correspondence contained reports on the No-tax Campaign referred to above, and this part was suppressed,¹⁰ (—apparently for good ; for, it never surfaced again, even though occasion for its use arose several times.)

These and similar other evidences, which are relevant to an understanding the 1820s of India's history but which have so far been denied consideration, are our passports. It is on the strength of these evidences that we claim to be heard. It means that our submission, even though it is at variance with all past assessments, may yet be true. As we proceed, we shall find that some of the left-out evidences are more than supplementary details ; they do not just add a new wing to an existing structure ; they call for demolishing or restructuring some of the existing wings. For example, the evidence that in May 1827 Hurrymohun Tagore and 28 other Calcutta 'Natives' and 12 Europeans convened a public meeting to examine the extent of authority of India's Governor General in Council, and that they formed an organization with the object of depriving

him of his right to levy taxes ; and the evidence that all these were happening in the midst of exhortations like : "Your European tyrants are few in number, murder them" ; and that these exhortations were exciting the "hopes and speculations of the millions." These evidences, however retouched or rearranged, cannot be accommodated in the structures available in any of our histories or biographies.

This India, of which we get glimpses in the evidences exemplified above, is unknown, unbelievable to us. But once the existence of these and similar other evidences are established, this India,—believable or not,—has got to be accepted. Our task is to bring the relevant evidences into focus and to prove their authenticity.

CHAPTER 2

"ALL INDIA LOOKING OUT FOR OUR DOWNFALL"

Our finding is that a Calcutta group of Hindus and Eurasians, aided and encouraged by some of their European friends, initiated and ran a movement for securing political rights amounting to self government and succeeded in getting some of their demands accepted outright and the others conceded in principle. The period concerned is the 1820s.

This finding is contrary not only to the beliefs of others but also to those of ours. Along with everybody else we also know and believe that at the concerned time the British had the strongest single striking force in this part of the world ; that it was then thinking not only of consolidating its gains in the areas already in its possession, but also of moving across the Indus, overtaking the Punjab and bringing Afghanistan within its sphere of influence. It is inconceivable that an authority, so sure of its power and so ambitious in its planning for the immediate future, could have been sufficiently overawed as to revise its political programme, by the sayings and doings of a Calcutta group of arm chair politicians with neither popular sentiment nor swords and guns to back them.

Even a much scaled down claim,—that the said Calcutta group of politicians had made an attempt to secure political rights amounting to self government but that it had not succeeded in its attempt,—does not sound convincing, though perhaps it does not provoke derisive laughter. Had not the supporting evidences been documents published in the 1820s itself and still available in their original prints, we ourselves would have hesitated to embark on this venture.

One reason, perhaps the main reason, for our feeling allergic to this finding is that it is not amongst our natural expectations. A movement for securing political rights can arise and thrive only amongst people interested in such rights. Our forefathers of those days, living in the villages, are supposed to have been a-political to an extreme. What they wanted was not this or that right, but peace, security against external and internal aggression ; and that obtained, they wanted to be left alone to live their own lives. And in this respect the British are known to have more than met their wishes. As for our forefathers living in the cities, they

"offered up regular prayers for the success of the British arms... considering the cause of the British as their own, and firmly believing that on its success, their own happiness and prosperity depended '"¹

They even developed a new political philosophy :

"When we have to depend by the very condition of our existence upon all things and all beings, is not this fiery love of independence a chimera ? ...Why then should a nation have the absurd pride of not depending upon another ?'"²

Whatever else such a people can put their hands to, they never run a movement for securing political freedom or national independence,—we reason.

The reasoning is perhaps flawless. But the premises are not. Neither our forefathers living in the villages were so unmindful, nor those living in the cities so appreciative, of what their rulers were doing.

The general body of the people had, till then, a very raw deal, even in the matter of security. In the 1810s and 1820s the British power did not enjoy the reputation of invincibility. Armed raiders, we find, operated with impunity well inside what was coming to be known as British India. The Pindaris, for example, "like swarms of locusts...destroyed and left waste whatever province they visited."³ "In 1812 they harried the British districts of Mirzapur and Shahabad. During 1815-16 they devastated the Nizam's dominions and early in 1816 wantonly plun-

dered the Northern Sarkars."⁴ We get from a Governor General's private journal :

"A village was surrounded....The poor villagers....[fled] to the desperate resolution of burning themselves with their wives and children... the dreadful sacrifice was immediately fulfilled....The Pindaries which penetrated into the Nizam's territories and ours...could not amount to less than 28,000 horse. They carried off booty to the value of more than a million sterling."⁵

What was the reaction of the Supreme Authority to this development ? The said Governor General reported :

"I am strictly forbidden by the Court of Directors to undertake the suppression of the fiends who occasioned the heart rending scene, lest I should provoke a war with the Mahrattas."⁶

During the same period, the Pathans "moved about with the materials of regular battles and sieges, so as to work on the fears of princes and men in power, extorting contributions and other advantages from them, by such intimidation as an efficient army could only impress, while the objects of the Pindarees was universal plunder."⁷

In Madras "on the night of 22nd December, 1823 a vast multitude ["not less than 100,000 persons"] assembled in the Black Town" and looted "the stores belonging to native merchants."⁸ At another place in Madras, next year, a British force attacking a fort "which had manifested a disposition to revolt [was] cut off to a man."⁹

The Pindari and the Pathan troubles lasted for about a dozen years till Governor General Moira (later known as Lord Hastings) suppressed the Pindaris and bought off the Pathans in 1817. What this very Governor General then did to one of the regions saved by him from the Pindari depredations, is also worth recalling.

The Indian ruler of a southern kingdom,—Hyderabad, comprising in 1815 about one-third of the total British India, was a habitual borrower,—the interest charged being 25 per cent, the principal contracted for being artificially inflated, and Governor General Moira and/or his relatives being amongst the beneficiaries of this arrangement. When attention was drawn to this very high rate of interest, the objection was met by converting the loan of Rs. 52

lacs at 25 per cent to that of Rs. 60 lacs at 18 per cent. This happy solution was made effective by a casting vote of Lord Moira, the superior authorities in England looking the other way.¹⁰

According to Government records, the Nepalese had caused troubles in the North, the Mahrattas in the South, the Rajputs in the centre ; and these were taken care of by Lord Moira during the years 1815-18. In 1823-24, however, no less a person than Bishop Heber thus recorded his personal assessment of what the Moira solutions had amounted to in the areas traversed by him.¹¹

"There are rumours of wars...people talk of armies and invasions from the Seiks, Nepal and Nagpur."

"Rohilkund is as quiet as it is ever likely to be."

"Rajputana is said to be again quiet."

"I passed Bhurtpoor a month before the war began and Jyepore little more than a month after the revolution. A similar good fortune attended me with regard to a rebellion in Dungarpoor."

In the East, the Burmese irregulars raided the coastal areas and the Burmese regulars advanced in rapid strides towards the British border across Assam. In Bengal, even its capital was not always considered a safe place ; at the first rumour of trouble, even hundreds of miles away, Europeans living in Calcutta are known to have sent their families to the Fort for security, while Indians sent theirs to the interior.¹²

What however put the distinguishing mark on Bengal, were the doings of her legally constituted government under Warren Hastings, Lord Cornwallis and Lord Wellesley. Hastings made the astounding, the impossible, experiment of raising revenue by yearly auctions. It was a cruel experiment and a foolish one. It caused untold misery to the people ; it did not yield the expected results. The auction-raised revenue farmers, after fleecing the people as much as the latter could be made to bear, found it more attractive to abscond or to go to jail than to pay the

government's share of revenue at the auction rate. Lord Cornwallis the more sagacious, rectified this defect. He entered into permanent agreements with the revenue farmers as regards *their* obligations to the government, leaving them free to do whatever they liked to the ultimate users of land. Lord Wellesley, coming next, made the system perfect. The revenue farmers, now called the Lords of the Land, the Zemindars, pointed out that under the Cornwallis modification they could no doubt themselves do whatever they liked to their tenants, but they could not, at least legally, get the police to help them do so. The government saw the reasonableness of this argument, and by the Regulation VII of 1799 armed the zemindars with still more powers. The cup of misery of the people was made full. This Hastings—Cornwallis—Wellesley perfection remained practically unaltered till the 1850s.

And it was this Bengal, with its cup of misery full, which was soon called upon to participate in a new experiment. The people had in the past understood that the British were primarily, perhaps solely, interested in buying various kinds of merchandise from India and in selling them to Europe. By the turn of the new century, it appeared they were mostly interested not in buying from India but in selling to India. And their new-found machines aided by their new-found powers to manipulate tariff rates, deprived hundreds of thousands of Indians of their principal means of livelihood. As a British historian has put it,

"The British first under mercantilism, protected British industry from Indian competition ; and next, under *laissez faire* denied protection to the Indian economy.^{1 3}

By the 1820s, Lancashire could

"undersell the native weaver in his own market ; in Dacca (for example) a million of human beings...[were] sinking with poverty ^{1 4}

It was a new experience for India. Our people had scores of changes of masters in the past, but they could not recall any parallel happening in their history. The earlier changes meant nothing or little to India's millions.

living in their villages. The latest affected everybody. For, the newcomers were not satisfied seizing the throne or becoming governors and the like. They disrupted the country's manufacture; and forced her weavers, spinners to take to agriculture, causing serious mal-adjustment in the agricultural sector as well.

Historians, dealing with the early period of British India, have generally highlighted the misdeeds of men like Clive, Hastings and Paget.—They plundered this treasury, 'judicially murdered' that man, dealt unduly harshly with that regiment. The result has been that the British conquest of India looks like the whitest in the world. For, there was hardly ever any conquest of one country by another in which there had not been greedy plunderings or wanton killings. The British conquest is found to have differed from all others in that Clive and Hastings got impeached if not punished.

What these two did to further their personal interests or what Paget did to maintain discipline, caused infinitely less misery to the people of India, than what the British system did,—for example, the system which clothed Governors General with magisterial powers and put them to carry on the Company's trade; and the system which successfully tempted statesmen up to the level of prime ministers to maim and kill Indian industry, through manipulation of tariff rates and outright bannings, in their bid to placate English competitors and secure votes; and the system which again induced those statesmen first to let the revenue of country after country to be fraudulently appropriated by British money lenders and then to annex the concerned territories on the ground of mal-administration; and the system which retained discredited potentates upon their thrones on the sole condition that they would maintain an army, disregarding the maxim that power without responsibility is the worst of all powers.

Neither the weavers, nor the spinners, nor the

cultivators whose land they encroached upon, understood or even had ever heard of mercantile theory or of *laissez faire*. But none of them was so naive as not to realise that cotton piece goods coming from the white people, had something to do with their loss of trade. Besides, there was no dearth of people in any area who, reasonably or unreasonably, ascribed everything going wrong to the advent of the British. The 'new-rich', created by the British and living in the cities, had far less chance of influencing public opinion in favour of the British, than the 'old-rich', then in straitened conditions and living amongst them, had in making them anti-British.

Our forefathers, wallowing in misery in the rural areas whether in Bengal or elsewhere, were hurt, and were sore against the regime which, they believed, was at the root of their suffering. And they were not all cowards. Barely 30 years later, Governor General Canning complained of having to find adequate punishment for a people who feared neither death nor tortures. We get a different picture, because, when we say 'India' we mean 'Bengal' and when we say 'Bengal' we mean 'Calcutta'.

And in India of the 1820s, the British was not the only lion without an alternative. In the West,

"During the last few years Ranjeet Singh has been making rapid strides towards an extended empire."¹⁵

In the East, Burma was claiming

"that all Bengal as far as Calcutta and Moorshedabad ought to be ceded to [her]...[and her king] has been engaged in a long course of conquest and has never met with his match till now."¹⁶

And, in between, there were hundreds of petty chiefs, not of course hopeful of gaining an all-India status, but very much interested in carving out independent local kingdoms.

We have in our collection no statement left by any local chief or weaver or tiller of the land, to the effect that anybody wanted the British rule to end. But we have plenty of fears, shared in secret by men, who had to deal with the situation, to the effect that

"all India at all times is looking out for our downfall."¹⁷

"a serious check in any part of India would raise half the country against us."¹⁸

"secret war against our authority...is always carrying on by numerous though unseen hands...circular letters and proclamations are dispersed over the country with celerity that is incredible...[and] are read with avidity."¹⁹

And in this respect, Bengal did not differ very much from the rest of India. Even after Lord Bentinck's seven year long strenuous efforts to mend matters,

"The utmost that can be said of native society in general, even in its most favourable aspect, is that there is no hostility, but in place of it a cold, dead, apathetic indifference which would lead the people to change masters tomorrow without a struggle and without a sigh."²⁰

That was India as she was in her tens of thousands of villages. As for India of the cities, our picture differs from the traditional picture in one or two respects only. We propose to save space leaving out the common features and drawing attention to the points of difference only.

Not everybody of the class known as the 'New Rich' was happy as he was. Some of them rightly or wrongly believed that their grandfathers had lived greater lives. We get it from a Hindu,—Rammohun Roy, writing in 1823,

"that under their former Muhammadan Rulers the natives of this country enjoyed every political privilege in common with Mussulmans, being eligible to the highest offices in the state, entrusted with the command of armies and the government of provinces and often chosen as advisers to their Prince, without disqualification or degrading distinction on account of their religion or the place of their birth. They used to receive free grants of land exempted from any payments of revenue, and besides the highest salaries allowed under the Government, they enjoyed free of charges, large tracts of country attached to certain offices of trust and dignity, while natives of learning and talent were rewarded with numerous situations of honour and emolument."²¹

Some of them had "studied and thoroughly" understood "the politics of Europe," and one surprised a French visitor "by the accuracy and the range of his knowledge of the various states of Europe."²² In the West, including America, they saw country after country gaining independence or

striving after independence, and despotic rule being replaced by constitutional form of government. In the Old World, in 1820, "a successful military revolution in Madrid forced the King of Spain to revive the very democratic constitution of 1812....Revolutions broke out in Portugal, Piedmont and Naples, each demanding likewise the constitution of 1812... In March 1821 the Greeks revolted against the Turks."²³ In the New World, about this time, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Equador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela emerged as independent states with constitutional form of government.

At least some of the Indians closely watched these developments abroad ; for, we find, they felt mortified when Naples had a setback, and held celebrations when South America scored a success.²⁴ And they had contact with those Westerners. When the patriots in "Madrid forced the King of Spain to revive the very democratic Constitution of 1812", they dedicated a copy of the same to one of those Indians, viz., Rammohun Roy.²⁵

In the East, nearer home, they saw at the same time the spectacle of country after country being conquered, ceded, purchased, 'liberated' and put under foreign rule, which by its very nature was despotic. The regions conquered, ceded etc., do not perhaps need be listed by name ; those 'liberated' were Assam, Manipur, South Burma.²⁶

At least some of them felt distressed at this strange spectacle of two parallel but opposite movements holding the world at the same time,—country after country gaining independence and constitutional form of government in the West, and country after country going the other way in the East. Some of them felt distressed, as they shared the sentiment that,

"It is impossible for a thinking man not to feel the evils of political subjection and dependence on a foreign people...."²⁷

It was this India in which arose the phenomenon we are about to describe. The general body of the people might

not have been interested in this or that political right, but they harboured "a cold, dead, apathetic indifference which would lead" them "to change masters tomorrow without a struggle and without a sigh," and their natural leaders were very much interested in turning that neutral apathy to positive hatred against the British. As for the townsmen, some of them appear to have lived double lives. For example, the same man who talked of "the evils of dependence on a foreign people", called "the love of independence a chimera."²⁸

In this India of the 1820s, amidst many attempts to make this or that part of the country free of foreign domination, one was initiated in Calcutta. The speciality of this Calcutta attempt lay in that its leaders appear to have (a) thought of the country as a whole; (b) followed or tried to follow the English and the American pattern of struggle also for securing political rights; and (c) aimed not only at the ending of foreign domination but also at the establishment of British parliamentary form of government here.

CHAPTER 3

A HOUSE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF

What England herself (as distinguished from her executives ruling India) then looked like to Indians is also of relevance to our study,—not England as she really and truly (?) was, but as she appeared to her subject people.

Here again we have to refer to a 'conspiracy of silence'. Those in authority believed that, what the English people or a section thereof were thinking, hoping and trying to do at the time should not be allowed to come before the public, because it might lead to a French Revolution type upheaval in Britain and in the British Empire. To save time and space, we reproduce below a French historian's description of England of the years 1816-22 and of this conspiracy of silence.¹

"Once more panic gripped the ruling class. ... The aim of the Radicals ... was not simply manhood suffrage ... they sought to abolish private property. ... The first measure ... was to increase the Army by ten thousand ... secondly to secure the passage of a series of Coercion Acts. ... Parliament met on November 23 and adjourned on December 29 [1819]. Within little over a month all the measures introduced by the Government had been passed. They have gone down to history under the name of the 'Six Acts.'"

"Two of the Six Acts were intended to provide against the danger of an armed revolution. The first prohibited every meeting or assembly for drilling or other military exercises. ... The second Act ... restricted ... [the] right to bear arms. [By the third it was declared] illegal for anyone to attend a public meeting who was not a resident of the parish. ... Meetings whose object was to alter the state of the law otherwise than by the authority of the Parliament ... were absolutely prohibited. ... The remaining bills restricted the freedom of the Press."

These Acts were no doubt temporary measures, but they served their purpose. Till 1822 they prevented England (and the world) from getting any consolidated picture of what England looked like in the years 1816-22. And when the embargo was lifted, historians invariably added to their description of this period a note to the effect that

the Radical movement of the time was a still-born affair, that it did not have any follow up. Had they written their piece in, say 1820, they could not have added that rider, and that means a hell of a difference.

But this conspiracy of silence was not a complete success. The truth was kept quarantined; the rumour leaked through. Some of the Indians of the time, for example, Rammohun Roy and Harihar Dutt, read imported English language newspapers, and had close contact with Europeans who (for selfish or ideological reasons) did not consider themselves as committed to upholding the 'greatness of England'.

In 1816-17 they heard of a "great meeting in Spa Fields on 15 November 1816 at which Hunt appeared with an escort carrying the tricolour flag ["the colours of the future British Republic"] and a revolutionary cap on top of a pike"; and of the riotous activity which followed. They also heard of the part Cobbett and Carlile, the great demagogues, and Burdett and others played in exciting the British people against their rulers. In 1818 they heard of a Westminster mob displaying "the savage ferocity which marked the mobs of Paris in the worst times." In 1819 they heard of the 'Peterloo massacre'. The Manchester reformers had invited Hunt to speak at a meeting held on 16 August at St. Peter's Field, where "some 50,000 or 60,000 people assembled ... carrying banners with revolutionary inscriptions. Soon after they heard of a 'plan for the seizure of London' and of a plot to murder the entire cabinet,—the Cato Street Plot of English history. They heard of Hunt's journey to London "surrounded by a crowd ... reckoned by the democratic papers at two or even three hundred thousand."

"On 13 September [1819] Hunt made a triumphal entry into London after his release on bail in Manchester, with a large red flag inscribed 'Liberty or Death'. Part of the unstamped Press was openly revolutionary: 'If ever it was the duty of Britons to resort to the use of arms to recover their freedom and hurl vengeance upon the heads of their tyrants, it is now.'"²

"In the middle of the turmoil Cobbett [who had gone out of England to escape financial ruin] arrived from America, bringing the bones of Tom Paine." "In the last days of 1819 was the appearance of the first of William Hone's verse pamphlets illustrated by Cruikshank. 'The Political House that Jack Built' ... was a plea for Reform and a challenge to Peterloo and the 'Six Acts', so popular that it had achieved fifty editions by the end of 1820."²

In 1820 they heard of a mad king yielding place to one whom, following a Wellington assessment, a French historian has described as "the old fool, sometimes tormented by the gout, at others stupefied by laudamum." In 1820-21 they heard of the nauseating pre-occupation of the British people of the time known as Queen Caroline's trial, and of the political crises arising therefrom. They had also heard of Wood and his followers trying to undermine the prestige of the Royalty by any means foul or fair; and of the London people disowning the Royalty and its support 'the Establishment' by electing Wood for the second time as their Mayor.

And all the time they had been hearing of the ugly situation developing in Ireland—of the denial of civil rights to six millions of Irish people on religious grounds, and of the probable outbreak of civil war there. (To knowledgeable Indians the case of Ireland was very revealing. Till 1800 Ireland had a 'Parliament' of her own which sat in Dublin. England's Prime Minister, Younger Pitt, abolished the Dublin Parliament, promising to give the Irish people representation on the English Parliament itself which sat in London. The first part of the programme accomplished, England's King, George III, disclosed that his coronation oath would not permit him to accept any Roman Catholic for his London Parliament. Knowledgeable Indians could not but realise that if Christian Ireland had such a raw deal at the hands of her Christian English masters, Heathen India had no chance at all of being dealt with fairly.)

The importance of such stories circulating in India is obvious. Responsible historians of later times would have

remembered that the 'Peterloo massacre' did not lead to a revolution, that the Cato Street Plot had no successors, that Ireland was appeased with concessions, that British economy revived soon after and anti-government feelings amongst the common people gradually petered out. But instead of facts reduced to their true size by hindsight, Indians of the early 1820s got unpurged gossips broadcast by irresponsible and sensation mongering writers and cartoonists of the time.

Not irrelevant is also the fact that these 'irresponsible people' were, at about the same time, bringing to India stories of political upheavals in other parts of the world,—in Spain, in Portugal, in Naples, in Europe's various American colonies.

A very pertinent question arises at this stage. We have assumed that knowledgeable Indians had got this picture of the world. Can we be sure of this assumption ?

Considering the matter in a general way we find that this period of political upheavals in England and in other parts of the world coincided with that brief interlude during which the Bengal Press enjoyed almost unfettered freedom,—the years 1818-1822. Some of the other pointers are indicated below.

In the late 1810s England had a standing army of about 30,000, of which 25,000 was stationed in Ireland and 5,000 in England. When the authorities started talking about adding to this strength (the English contingent of 5,000 was actually trebled soon after,) and even earlier the opposition there raised a hue and cry, the burthen of which was that 'England in peace time needs no standing army'. In January 1818 a British statesman, travelling in India, recorded in his diary :

"It is remarkable that he [Rammohun Roy] has studied and thoroughly understands the politics of Europe, but more particularly those of England ; and the last time I was in his company he argued forcibly against a standing army in a free country and quoted all the argument brought forward by the members of the opposition "

Did Indians realise that they were being discriminated against on religious or other grounds? Did they resent such treatment? Here is what an Indian, Rammohun Roy, recorded in 1823 :

"Under their former Muhammadan Rulers, the natives of this country enjoyed every political privilege in common with Mussulmans ... without disqualification or degrading distinction on account of their religion or the place of their birth ... Although under the British rule the natives of India have entirely lost this political consequence, . . ."⁵

Did Indians know that Ireland was in ferment? Did they derive any hope therefrom? Did they know that out of 30,000 soldiers, 25,000 had to be stationed in Ireland? Here is a letter pertinent to these questions.

"Supposing that some 100 years hence the Native character becomes elevated ... is it possible that they will not have the spirit as well as the inclination to resist effectually any unjust and oppressive measures serving to degrade them in the scale of society? It should not be lost sight of that the position of India is very different from that of Ireland, to any quarter of which an English fleet may suddenly convey a body of troops ... and succeed in suppressing every effort of a refractory spirit ... [India] would prove ... either useful and profitable as ... an ally ... or troublesome and annoying as a determined enemy."⁶

Had Indians of the early 1820s heard of Burdett, Cobbett, Carlile, or Hunt? Of Wood running down the Royalty? Of the British people electing him as their Mayor and flying "the colours of the future British Republic"? Here are a few pointers apart from the fact that till 1823 the Bengal Press was free and arrogant.

At one of the specially requisitioned meetings of the East India Company's Court of Proprietors, Proprietor Jackson, speaking on behalf of the anti—Free Press group, said :

"If the press were free in India, what ... would there be to prevent the army from having Cobbett's Register to teach them politics on Saturday and Carlile's publications to teach them blasphemy on Sunday?"

This challenging question provoked Buckingham to write in his paper *Oriental Herald* :

"There is nothing whatever that can prevent both Cobbett and Carlile from being received from England in their original shape and read by as many of the army or any other body as like them, but we do not hear that they produce any ill effects."⁷

The last sentence is significant ; it suggests that English knowing Indians were then perhaps receiving Cobbett and Carlile. It is to be remembered that during the concerned years Cobbett's and Carlile's unorthodoxies were being reproduced or commented upon in London papers and those were available in Indian cities. Buckingham himself published some of the papers aimed at running down the Royalty, e.g., Princess Charlotte's death-bed letter to her father, the future George IV.⁸ Regarding knowledge of Sir Francis Burdett, we have from a letter of Rammohun Roy that Burdett once "liberally and spontaneously offered to give me a letter of introduction."⁹

As for the stories of political upheavals and freedom fights, which were then convulsing the other parts of the Old as well as the New World, circulating or not circulating in India, the picture is even clearer. In 1820 Indians participated in festivities celebrating the freedom fights in Spain. In 1821 Indians felt mortified when the freedom fighters suffered a setback in Naples. In 1822 Indians themselves organised celebrations to highlight the victories scored by the South Americans against their European rulers.¹⁰

Lastly, we have from an assesment belonging to April 1822 that Indian politicians of the time, e.g., Rammohun Roy, had then the benefit of "a person whose great experience and extensive acquaintance with the history, learning and manner of both Europe and Asia cannot fail to be of great utility to" them.¹¹ When Harihar Dutt's *Jam-i-Jehan Nooma* started its career, the Calcutta *John Bull* thus introduced it to its readers :

"We have read the preface to the new Persian and Hindoostanee newspaper called the *Jam-i-Jehan Nooma*, and think it exceedingly well calculated to attract public attention. The Editor proposes to publish not only everything valuable in the English papers, but everything curious that may reach him [from England] in private letters."¹²

And the London veteran *Asiatic Journal* found it "necessary to watch the progress of discontent and political

animosity which certain busybodies have latterly introduced from the western hemisphere and are so eagerly endeavouring to instil into the minds of our Indian subjects."¹³

The "busybodies" referred to above were James Silk Buckingham, Sandford Arnot and James Sutherland,—the *Calcutta Journal* group of Englishmen. That the necessary watch was kept by the authorities and that they did not overlook those busybodies endeavouring to instil discontent and political animosity into the minds of their Indian subjects, are evidenced by the tell-tale fact that within a year of receipt of this advice the Indian Government ordered the deportation of Buckingham and Arnot from India and that Sutherland was treated as a persona-non-grata.¹⁴

This position, that India of the 1820s kept herself posted with political developments in other parts of the world, was true not only for Calcutta but also for, at least, the Upper Provinces. According to H. H. Wilson, testifying on the basis of his 1820 experiences, "there were [then] many translations [from English Works] in the Upper Provinces ... [one of the Works being] *The Principles of the Laws of Nations*."¹⁵ Before a people translate such a book, they read many others of political significance.

In the preceding chapter we have seen that, according to responsible British observers of the time, all India was then looking out for the downfall of their Indian Empire. In this chapter we have seen that some of the knowledgeable Indians of the time were aware of the political upsurges then convulsing England, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, and Europe's various colonies in the Americas. It was perhaps not a mere coincidence that at about the same time India was raising the cry: "Your European tyrants are few in number, murder them" and England was resounding with "If ever it was the duty of Britons to ... hurl vengeance upon the heads of their tyrants, it is now."

India of this period was aware of still another face of England. That face was as ugly and as terrifying as any could be. Standing on the threshold of the 1820s and looking upon England and Europe and the world of the preceding two centuries, knowledgeable Indians like Radhakanta Deb, Rammohun Roy and several others could not fail to see that, till then, England had developed only one major non-European country ; that country was North America ; and in that country England had solved her 'aboriginals problem' by just exterminating the aboriginals. They also could not but realise that in this achievement England stood alone. At the concerned time the Dutch, the French, the Portuguese, the Spanish all had their share of troubles with their mestizos and mulattos and 'unmixed natives' counted in their lakhs ; but not the English. They had all treated the natives brutally,—dispossessed them of their lands ; 'cured' them of their religious beliefs and practices, not all harmful ; introduced them to European vices and diseases (in addition to the plenty of those they already had.) But it was left to the English people alone to cut the gordian knot of their aboriginals problem at its very root.

The position looked, if possible, still more forbidding. No sooner than the aboriginals problem in North America was on its way to solution, or even earlier, the English developers of the region came up against another hurdle of immense proportion,—that of shortage of hewers of wood and drawers of water. They found the original inhabitants either dead and buried or non-cooperative. (They branded them 'lazy' ; nobody ever said or guessed that the concerned natives might have been trying to use the only weapon they still had at their disposal,—that of non-cooperating with their masters who were inexorably and not very slowly pushing them toward their total annihilation.) This second big problem, the developers solved by extending their operations to another continent, Africa, and importing from there readymade slaves.

Slavery, as everybody knows, was then an all-world institution. But others generally took slaves when they, for some reason or other, conquered some other country (or part of the same country). Europeans deliberately organised raids, conquests for the specific purpose of taking slaves, and of trading in them. And in that game the English people out-topped all other Europeans, for the very natural reason that at the time the country under their development programme had the greatest demand for slaves.

Human nature being what it is, the most natural prayer of Radhakanta Debs and Rammohun Roys would have been : "If we must have foreign masters, give us then foreign masters ; if we must have despots, let them be despots ; but let them come from anywhere other than England." (We know, Radhakanta Dev never made any such prayer. We know, Rammohun Roy is reputed to have many times prayed to the contrary. We have here put in their mouth the prayer which would have come most natural to them. India had, in the past, experienced scores of invasions ; but never had she been *ruled* by a people with so forbidding a record as that of the English. England's benign face, the face which her poets, her philosophers, her philanthropists gave her, is no doubt a fact of history ; but India saw that face long after the 1820s. Even so enlightened a Court of Directors of the time, which rose to the height of promising Indians not 'Hindoo learning but useful learning', added pontifically : "it has never been thought necessary to establish colleges for the cultivation of poetry."¹⁶ That Englishmen, so proud of their knowledge of Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, could ever write as above, shows what England then thought of Indians and their cultural needs.

It was in this India, aspiring after a political change towards freedom, and aware of the very significant fact that England was then a house divided against itself, and perhaps convinced that any change would be for the better, that arose

the phenomenon under our study. If Indians of the time had hindsight or the benefit of reading histories written in later times, they would have known that England survived the 1820s with only minor modifications and also that England subsequently conferred many benefits on India. But they did not have hindsight or the benefit of reading later histories. To understand a country or a people of any particular time, it is sometimes of great importance to know what that country or that people *believed* at that particular time even if that belief was later discovered to have been unfounded. And, specifically, to understand the political aspirations and strivings of any subject country at any particular time, it is essential to know what the ruling country looked like to that subject country at that particular time.

CHAPTER 4

"YOUR EUROPEAN TYRANTS ARE FEW IN NUMBER, MURDER THEM"

India of the 1820s pulsated with the cry: "Your European tyrants are few in number, murder them." And her capital city claimed that, in her Golden Age, Indians liquidated their despotically minded rulers by putting "to death almost all the males of that tribe." (There is hardly any difference between the two approaches beyond that the first is in the imperative mood while the second is in the form of a statement.)

The second observation is from the pen of Rammohun Roy, included in a pamphlet published by him for free distribution some time in 1821-22.¹ The first is from a speech delivered by (Governor Sir John) Malcolm at a meeting of the Proprietors of the East India Company held in July 1824.² It was a special meeting, requisitioned by Rammohun's London friends, to consider *inter alia* his protest against the gagging of the Indian Press. Its importance is much heightened by the fact that, when Malcolm was thus describing the Indian situation, Calcutta was in the midst of a panic and the British Nationals there were sending their families to the Fort for protection.³ And when his speech was received in India, "All the [European] inhabitants of Barrackpur expected nothing but assassination."⁴ According to Malcolm, he was not speaking of a solitary instance.— "The native soldiery are always appealed to, and the advice to them is, in all instances I have met with, the same: Your European tyrants are few in number, murder them."

Evidently, in the early 1820s, one or more groups in India were preparing the ground for a showdown with the British Power, and something, which looked like a showdown, occurred around 1824-25.⁵ In this section we

propose to study the steps taken by a particular group in preparing the ground.

Freedom, political freedom is a two-facet concept. On the one hand it means territorial sovereignty. When a country or a people lives under the control of an alien country or of an alien people, we say it is not free. On the other hand, political freedom means the right and opportunity of the concerned people to frame laws by which they are to live and to ensure that they actually live by them. When a country or a people is ruled despotically, we say it is not free even if the concerned despot happens to be a "son of the soil."

Strange it is that we argue whether or not the attempt made by Siraj-ud-daulah to keep his dominion free of British control was an attempt to retain freedom, and that made by Nana Saheb to pull his dominion out of British control was an attempt to regain freedom.⁶ Of course they and their likes were freedom fighters. They tried, risking everything they had, to retain or to regain territorial sovereignty for that part of their country for which they were responsible. To deny them that honour, on the ground that they were despots, would amount to denying the same to those of Austria, Russia and Spain who fought Napoleon out of their country and to claiming that the advent of Napoleon had not threatened those countries with the loss of freedom.

British India of the 1820s had no freedom in either sense of the term; neither she had territorial sovereignty nor her people had any right *vis-a-vis* their rulers. Whoever in British India tried to loosen the hold of the British over India was a freedom fighter; so was anybody who tried to limit the 'rights, privileges and power' of those in authority there. The freedom fighters under our study earned that title in both senses of the term. They tried to end foreign domination of their land of birth; they tried also to secure for her people maximum political right *vis-a-vis* their rulers.

Indians of the time understood what territorial sovereignty meant, but not what was people's right *vis-a-vis* their rulers. The very first item in India's political programme of the time had therefore to be that of drawing attention to the concept of kings or governors functioning under constitutional checks.

This part of the programme appears to have been launched, with Calcutta as its epi-centre, in or around 1820. The sponsors were a small group of Hindus and Eurasians, aided and encouraged by a few of their European friends.

We do not find any Muslim name amongst the organisers of this programme. But there are indications that attempts were made to involve the Muslims also. For example, while supporting freedom fights everywhere, an exception was made in the case of Greece. The Turkish rule there was as despotic as any could be. Yet the Calcutta group of politicians raised their voice on the side of the ruling power, not forgetting to mention that they were supporting Turkey because it was a Muslim country,

"which is illuminated by the rays of a belief in the unity of God and defended by the warriors shouting Alla-ho-Akbar."⁷

This looks very much like an attempt to attract the Muslim community to the programme, and reminds us of the Congress support to the Khilafat Movement in 1919. (It appears that the attempt failed.)

The programme of indoctrination was set on foot in a way that defies belief. India was then under a despotic form of government in the sense that,

"The natives have no voice or participation in framing or administering laws (which are enacted or rescinded at the mere discretion of the government), in apportioning the revenue or taxes levied from them, in reviewing the public expenditure, or in controlling the administration. The Government in its relation to them is in fact substantially and necessarily despotic."⁸

In the capital city of such a country and within a furlong of the seat of the highest authority of the realm, an Indian,—Rammohun Roy, who owed his rise and importance entirely to the advent of the British, took to circulating openly and

freely, that India knew only one way of ending despotism, that of putting to "death almost all the males of that tribe."

As this is of importance to an understanding of the spirit of the time and also of the man responsible for its circulation, we reproduce below its relevant portions.

"At an early age of civilization, when the division into castes was first introduced among the inhabitants of India, the second tribe, who were to defend and rule the country, having adopted arbitrary and despotic practices, the others revolted against them; and under the personal command of the celebrated Parasuram, defeated the Royalists in several battles, and put cruelly to death almost all the males of that tribe. It was at last resolved that the legislative authority should be confined to the first class [the Brahmins, the intellectuals] who could have no share in the actual government of the state or in managing the revenue of the country under any pretence, while the second tribe [the Kshatriyas, the warriors] should exercise the executive authority. The consequence was, that India enjoyed peace and harmony for a great many centuries. The Brahmins ... Freely associating with all the other tribes ... were able to know their sentiments, and to appreciate the justness of their complaints and thereby to lay down such rules as were required, which often induced them to rectify the abuses that were practised by the second tribe."⁹

This piece has come down to us in the form of a note appended to an English language pamphlet. Since however its companion piece, describing the practice of the English people placed in like circumstances, was circulated both in English and Persian texts, it is reasonable to assume that this one also had Indian language circulations.

The companion piece, referred to above, was of this type :

"After the dethronement of Charles I and James II, who neglected the rights of their subjects, and since the constitution has been matured and firmly established on its present basis ... viz., a monarchical government limited by the national voice ..., the power of the nation has gradually increased."¹⁰

This line was repeatedly stressed in a series of articles published in Persian and English language periodicals.¹¹

What is striking is not that emphasis was laid on the need of ending despotism. It is that, emphasis was laid on ending it by violence. It should have sufficed to say that

when their rulers turned despots, Indians revolted and compelled their rulers to give up despotic practices. But Rammohun Roy, who wrote and circulated the concerned piece, drew pointed attention to the fact that in their bid to end despotism Indians of earlier days murdered almost all the males of the ruling class. And again, to illustrate that the English people agitated for and secured political rights, Rammohun did not cite the example of King John, who had granted those rights while retaining his throne, but those of Kings Charles I and James II, of whom the first lost his life and the second his throne.

The same group, at about the same time, was holding celebrations, public meetings in Calcutta, in honour of armed risings organised by freedom fighters in other countries,—in Spain, in Portugal, in Spanish America. We quote below two reports which bring into clear focus how much moved some of the Calcuttans were by failures and successes of these armed risings in other theatres of the world.

In August 1821, Calcutta heard that the Neapolitan freedom fighters had suffered a setback. One of the sponsors of our Calcutta programme of indoctrination felt so distressed at the news, that he cancelled a dinner engagement. He wrote further :

"From the unhappy news, I am obliged to conclude that I shall not live to see liberty restored to the nations of Europe and Asiatic nations, especially those that are European colonies, possessed of a greater degree of the same blessing than what they now enjoy. Under these circumstances I consider the cause of the Neapolitans as my own and their enemies as ours. Enemies to liberty and friends of despotism have never been and never will be ultimately successful."¹²

The same man held a celebration "on the arrival of important news of the success of the Spanish Patriots". Upon being asked why he had done so, he is said to have exclaimed :

"What ! Ought I to be insensible to the sufferings of my fellow-creatures wherever they are, or howsoever unconnected by interests, religion and language ?"¹³

(While on this point, we should take notice of a peculiarity of the political programme of this period. Whoever said anything between 1823 und 1835 about Indians having political rights, invariably added that he was very fond of the British rule. Since during this period the Indian Press was under government control, we can perhaps understand the situation better; if we remember how Indians of later times behaved when placed under similar restrictions. Also revealing is the fact that only those Indians talked of their glad acceptance of the British rule, who talked of the importance of political rights.)

The task of indoctrination was a formidable one. The area to be covered was vast. And those were the days when railways, radios, and newspapers were yet to come. The task was indeed a formidable one. But it was not as formidable as it appears at the first consideration.

For one thing, millions were then experiencing great difficulties, which could easily be traced to the advent of the British. As James Mill and many others have pointed out, Indians were accustomed to living under despotic rule. But the rule which was then being experimented with in India, was something unprecedented. India had neverbefore seen a king who traded as well as ruled. It was despotism made ten times worse. And even an unlettered Indian, living in the remote interior, could be easily made to understand that, injustice and oppression invariably occur, if the same man, who tried to buy from him at the lowest and sell to him at the highest, was the man who made laws and enforced them, and also decided whether the enforcement had been justly made. Millions also saw that in almost all cases of confrontation between the revenue farmers and the tillers of the land, the Government upheld the claims of the former. And those in Lower Bengal of course knew that while the Government collected its dues from zemindars at permanently fixed rates, the latter was allowed to extort from their tenants as much as they could be made

to bear, or even beyond. In other words, enough gunpowder was already there in most parts of the country.

For another, we get from Administrator John Malcolm's 1824 observations, that for a long time past "secret war" against the British authority was "always carrying on by numerous though unseen hands" and "circular letters and proclamations" issued by them were "read with avidity". And we get a confirmation of the same from Administrator Charles Metcalfe, writing confidentially to Lord Amherst in the same year.¹³ In other words, not only there was enough gunpowder dumps in most parts of the country, attempts were also being actually made at the time to put matches to them. And also that the response was encouraging.

Our Calcutta group of indoctrinators had for their client a people already made responsive to the idea of revolt. And they recalled to them what their forefathers of the Satyayuga had done "under the personal command of the celebrated Parasuram". And told them that the revolt led by Parasuram had earned the concerned people "peace and harmony for a great many centuries." Human nature being what it is, their clients, then at the height of their misery, could not but have felt excited at the prospect.

Some of the propaganda activity have been traced by contemporary observers themselves to the aforesaid Calcutta group of politicians by name.¹⁴ Of the rest also, a part appears to have been Calcutta inspired. For instance, the leaflet "in which both North and South Americas were held as examples to be followed by India." In India of the 1820s, Calcutta alone is known to have shown interest in freedom fights in other parts of the world. Similarly, what Malcolm heard about the ancient Indian arrangement under which the Brahmins "influenced and directed" the state policies, is but an echo of Rammohun's claim that in those days "the legislative authority" was "confined to the first class [the Brahmins] while the second tribe ... exercise the executive authority." And in the 1820s nobody

outside the said Calcutta group is known to have made this claim.

What Malcolm said on this point at the 9 July 1824 meeting of the Court of Proprietors is more revealing and brings the position into clearer focus. The Proprietors were engaged in discussing the gagging of the Indian Press and, *inter alia*, Rammohun Roy's Memorial to the London authority against the Press Regulation of 1823. Contending that this memorial and all other similar representations should be rejected, Malcolm observed :

There is one striking feature in it,—all the religious and civil classes are educated ... From their intellectual superiority they have ever influenced and directed the more numerous, ignorant and superstitious classes of their countrymen. These instructed classes, particularly the Brahmins who have already lost considerable wealth and power by the introduction of our power, fear, and justly, that its progress will still more degrade them."¹⁵

While observing thus about the natives' loss of influence and power on the advent of the British rule, Malcolm had before him Rammohun Roy's words : "that under their former Muhammadan Rulers the natives ... [were] eligible to the highest offices of the state" ; that "natives of learning and talent were rewarded with numerous situations of honour and emolument" ; that "under the British rule the natives of India have entirely lost this political consequence." And while observing further that their hostile feeling towards the British was "not likely to decrease from the necessity they are under of *concealing* it", Malcolm as well as some of his listeners had known that Rammohun Roy had hit upon a novel scheme of spreading subversive ideas. Under the guise of praising England, they had been circulating that the English people dethroned their kings when they misbehaved. Malcolms had also before them the example of the Indian pamphlet, *Brief Remarks regarding modern encroachments on the ancient rights of females*, in which, under the guise of discussing Indian women's loss of civil rights, the writer had recalled to the attention of his

people that their forefathers killed their rulers whenever they showed despotic tendency. This article had been, shortly before, reproduced in the *Asiatic Journal* which had wide patronage amongst the Company's Proprietors.

Malcolm next observed : "They are, to my knowledge, adepts in spreading discontent and exciting sedition and rebellion. They know well how to awaken the fears, to alarm the superstitious or to rouse the pride of those they address." We do not know what or whom Malcolm had in mind when he made this last remark ; but we know for certain that at the time he was aware of Rammohun Roy's political activities and "earnestly wished" that Rammohun would change his ways. And as we proceed we shall find, the propaganda activity carried on by Rammohun Roy and his friends in the Upper Provinces, which happened to be the home of most of our soldiers, got results. The people there became restive. The local rulers started complaining. The Paramount Power felt uneasy ; it ordered investigation. The result of the investigation was highly disconcerting.

CHAPTER 5

"A POWERFUL ENGINE AT WORK"

Considered from the Government's point of view, the investigation conducted by it as well as those conducted by private bodies, revealed a frightful development. It was found that a political indoctrination programme had been launched at Calcutta ; its object was to attract the people to the idea of constitutional form of government and to incite them to strive for the same ; it highlighted the need of adopting violent means to achieve its end ; it was already drawing attention in 'many and distant parts' of India and particularly in the martial areas. And, according to a London assessment, "a powerful engine [appeared to be] at work,"¹

This Calcutta development had easily attracted everybody's attention. For, it was an extremely unusual phenomenon,—a weekly paper, the *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* of Rammohun Roy, not limiting itself to giving the news of the day, such as storms, robberies, construction of bridges ; nor to writing about burning or popular topics such as suttees or elopements ; but taking to discussing the merits of the English constitution. It was something totally unprecedented. Not a single paper, before this weekly, had ever dealt with either the advantages or the disadvantages of the English or any other form of government. It was not a popular topic, and did not possess the potentiality of developing into one.

And the shift in taste in the matter of celebrations and festivities. Calcutta was known to spend lakhs of rupees on marriages, on *sradhs*, on *pujas*, on entertaining European dignitaries ; Calcutta was also known to celebrate victories scored by British arms at home and abroad. But holding "An Anniversary Dinner in commemoration of the Proclaimed Constitution" of Portugal² or celebrating "on

the arrival of important news of the success of the Spanish Patriots"³ was a new trend altogether.

Very naturally this development caused knowledgeable people to compare notes. In 1821, on the appearance of the Bengali weekly, the *Samvad Kaumudi*, a Calcutta veteran had warned :

"If it shall be confined to mere local facts and plain utility and instruction, without touching upon delicate questions of complicated policy . then and then only can we with a safe conscience give it our hearty approval,"⁴

By 'delicate questions of complicated policy' was meant the British policy or policies *vis-a-vis* native states,—meddling with which by Indian run papers had been thus frowned upon in anticipation. Before a year had elapsed, a new paper, the Persian language *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* of Rammohun Roy, started drawing pointed attention to the British policy *vis-a-vis* the British people, leaving the natives to examine whether or not it differed from the British policy followed in India. The 1821 prophets' reaction to this development could not but be unfavourable. Referring to the editor of that paper, a British statesman with Indian experience, John Malcolm, said :

"I was one of those who earnestly wished his [Rammohun Roy's] mind could have been withdrawn from useless schemes of speculative policy and directed to give us his useful aid in illustrating the past and present history of his countrymen."⁵

Others were more outspoken. A Director of the East India Company, N. B. Edmonstone, told his fellow Directors :

"There was at this moment [19 June 1822] a powerful engine at work labouring to effect this purpose [relieving "themselves from subjection to this country".] This was not a suppositious statement ... [I have] seen a paper in which both North and South Americas were held as examples to be followed by India".⁶

The said Director added to this diagnosis :

"Let those who advocated the freedom of the press in India look to the consequences. Through it she was [being] invited to shake off her subjection to this country."

The *Asiatic Journal* warned the authorities :

It is "necessary to watch the progress of that spirit of discontent and political animosity which certain busybodies have latterly introduced from the western hemisphere and are so eagerly endeavouring to instil into the minds of our Indian subjects."

The said Journal also added to its diagnosis :

"If then at such a juncture those restrictions [on the press] should be suddenly removed, ... in the course of a few years the largest portion of our most important province [Lower Bengal] will, in all probability, have changed their masters ... "

Secretary W. B. Bayley of the Bengal Establishment made a careful survey ;⁸ and he found that some people in Calcutta were raising complications in the Upper Provinces. Their paper, the *Jam-i-Jehan-Numa* was

"discussing openly and unreservedly the system of government pursued in Oude and in other states allied to the British Government" ;

and the "contents of the other Persian paper, the *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*, have been much in the same style as the above" ; and there was

"nothing in the tone of what has already appeared to indicate any such timidity or delicacy on the part of the editors as should restrain them from advancing step by step to the end which they or their patrons obviously contemplate [spreading discontent against the existing governments.]"

The Government also noticed that the same group which was running a programme to make the ruled conscious of their rights *vis-a-vis* their rulers, was holding out before them examples of freedom fights in different parts of the world. They could not but feel perturbed to find that one of their spokesmen (Rammohun Roy) in trying to prove that Indian women enjoyed greater civil rights in ancient times, had highlighted Indian people's revolts against their lawful kings because they had "adopted arbitrary and despotic practices".⁹ What has the one to do with the other, those in authority must have asked,—women's right to inherit property and subjects' right to murder their kings? They could not also take kindly to the programme

of circulating in India that the English people dethroned and beheaded their kings when they misbehaved. They concluded :

"The liberty of the press ... is not consistent with the character of our institutions in this country, or with the extraordinary nature of our dominions in India."¹⁰

Contemporary observers had for their consultation further evidences which have not come down to our time. For example, the "elaborate speech" in which Rammohun Roy "emphatically boast[ed] the advantages of political freedom" (Abbe Dubois, 1820); the "paper in which both North and South Americas were held as examples to be followed by India" (Director Edmonstone, 1822); the papers in which "Bengalees declaim[ed] against the efforts of the Tories to crush the infant liberty of the press" (Governor Elphinstone, 1822); the papers in which Rammohun Roy and his friends were "discussing openly and unreservedly the system of government pursued in Oude and in other states allied to the British Government" which necessitated the gagging of the press (Secretary Bayley, 1822); the periodical which looked like a 'fire-brand' to the *Asiatic Journal* (1822).¹¹

Fortunately for our study, what has come down to our time is sufficiently revealing. If Rammohun Roy and his friends were known to have done nothing but circulating in Bengal and in the politically sensitive martial provinces the belief that England dethroned and India put to death their despotic rulers, at a time when the Indian administration was patently despotic and when unidentified voices were already urging the people to murder their rulers, they had been committing crass treason. And the price of that type of treason was death.

What has been recounted above defies belief. Rammohun Roy, for example, owed his rise, progress and importance entirely to the advent of the British rule. And by his own admission he was aware "that on its success their own happiness and prosperity depended."¹² He also knew that

he did not have even the protection of the *habeas corpus* the moment he crossed the Mahratta Ditch and, while outside its limits, could be arrested and kept under detention for any length of time at the sole discretion of the Government. His European associates knew that even within the limits of the Mahratta Ditch they could be seized at any time and sent out of India. Yet Rammohun and his Indian and European associates went on celebrating armed risings in the Americas and elsewhere, applauding the English practice of dethroning their despotic rulers, recalling to Indians that their forefathers put to death their despotic kings,—all amidst direct exhortations (by unidentified persons) to murder their rulers of the time. It does defy belief.

A question arises at this stage. How could Rammohun and his Indian associates escape the hangman's rope? How did his European associate Buckingham escape deportation till it was discovered that he had no licence to stay in India? One plausible explanation is that the authorities did not want to act outside the law. That explanation does not hold water. For the Government, all the time, had at its disposal a law under which Buckingham could be sent out of India at any time the Government so desired, yet no action was taken till it was discovered that he had no licence. And the Government, all the time, had a law under which Rammohun Roy could have been quite legally prosecuted on a charge of inciting people against established regimes as per the finding of the Bayley investigation; but no action was taken against him or his people till the Treasurer of the Burdwan Collectorate got conscience stricken.¹⁵

So far we have not uncovered all the strings. But one or two have already come to light. In those days even Governors General embezzled funds; and in those days India was owned not by one but by many masters, and those masters were at loggerheads with one another.

'Embezzlement of funds' and 'Governors General of India' are not, and should not be, compatible terms. But the 1820s were strange times. At least one Governor General was then openly accused of having embezzled funds. In 1824, for example, the *Sunday Times* of London told the world :

"An embezzlement of £800,000 has been discovered by the Court of Directors, which embezzlement is the act of the late Governor General of India [Lord Moira, better known as Lord Hastings]"¹⁴

This charge of embezzlement was not officially admitted by the Court of Directors, but what was officially admitted was damaging enough. Moira was not dismissed or recalled in consideration of his straitened financial position at the time ; had he lost his Indian salary, he would have headed straightway to the Court of Insolvents. He was saved, because at the time George IV happened to be the king of Great Britain, and Lord Moira and George IV were more than friends, the former having once saved the latter by lending him about a lakh of rupees.¹⁵

The charge against Governor General Moira was that he had misused his official position to enable his son-in-law Rumbold and the Palmer Brothers (Hyderabad ; Calcutta) amass princely fortunes by fraudulent means. Rammohun Roy and James Silk Buckingham, according to Secretary Bayley's report as also various other contemporary records, belonged to or were associated with the political group which was backed by the Palmer Brothers. (One of the brothers, John Palmer, was a proprietor of the *Calcutta Journal*, run by Buckingham.) Apparently, so long as Lord Moira was in charge of India, that particular group of politicians enjoyed some sort of immunity. Not irrelevant is the finding that it was Moira who had rescinded the Wellesley system of pre-censorship of the Indian Press, and the findings that the next gagging of the Indian Press occurred soon after Moira's relinquishment of charge, and Buckingham got his deportation order almost immediate-

ly after Moira's departure, and that the London front of our Calcutta group vigorously defended Moira when he was being assailed there. Incidentally, the last noted development offered a strange spectacle, that of an anti—East India Company group defending an executive of the said Company.

The other fact, which provided protective cover for our Calcutta politicians, was that India was the property of more than one owner, and her owners had, not only different but, conflicting interests. For example, there were Englishmen who looked upon acquisition of territory as "repugnant to the wish, the honour and the policy of the British nation" as also Englishmen who paid princely rewards for acquisition of territory ; there were Englishmen who wanted Dacca muslin to beat Manchester piecegoods in competition as also those who wanted victory for the latter ; there were Englishmen who were particular that the East India Company should let the Indian gods and goddesses to 'rule India for ever' as also Englishmen who were "willing to abolish the East India Company altogether rather than not provide for India a passage for the entrance of [Christian] light, truth and moral improvement and happiness."¹⁶ As we proceed, we shall find, there were even Englishmen who backed Indian sepoys whose menacing postures had driven other Englishmen to the Fort for protection.¹⁷ This state of things also enabled Rammohun Roy and his friends carry on their subversive activities. (Further particulars of their activities of this sort are given in the next chapter.)

CHAPTER 6

THE REMEDY AND THE RESPONSE

The remedy prescribed, was controlling the Press. The remedy adopted was the Press Regulation of 1823. By this Regulation the Government assumed the power of putting out of commission any paper or any press without having to assign any reason.

The Press Regulation was decided upon towards the close of the year 1822. It was passed in March 1823, and promulgated in the following month. The other steps taken by the Government in this connection were the deportation of one of the sponsors of the aforesaid programme, viz., James Silk Buckingham, in March 1823 and that of another of that group, viz., Sandford Arnot, in December next.¹

As for the Indians, they also had their share of sufferings, which, they believed, were caused by the "arbitrary usage of the [Local] Government", acting under the encouragement of the Court of Directors.² We have from a participator, Dwarkanath Tagore :

"none of the natives cou'd I prevail upon to join me, and I believe it was thought that I should be hanged the next day for my boldness [in asking for a free press]."³

Nobody is known to have been hanged. But by July 1824 a charge of misappropriating government money was filed (on the strength of one Sibnarayan Roy's confession) against a son of Rammohun Roy who was one of the sponsors of the programme under discussion. The charge misfired. The accused was tried by the highest criminal court of the realm, and was acquitted, while his accuser Sibnarayan Roy was punished.⁴ But the way the said case was conducted, revealed certain very disquieting features, which must have made the people concerned think not twice but twenty times before getting further involved.

The case against Rammohun's son was an ordinary one of defalcation. But extraordinary arrangements were made by the Government to conduct it.⁵ Under a 'special dispensation' of the Governor General, an officer holding the high position of "the Superintendent and Remembrancer for Legal Affairs" was "specially deputed as a commissioner to enquire into the sum embezzled." Normally officers of this rank did not handle such cases.

It was also noticed that the said special prosecutor, Edmund Molony, took extra-legal steps to obtain a conviction, and when the (Acting) Chief Justice of the Nizamut Adawlut, Courtenay Smith, directed the Circuit Judge

"to conduct yourself towards the Superintendent as you would conduct yourself towards any ordinary prosecutor,"

Molony, 'the extraordinary prosecutor', disregarding all precedents, complained direct to the Governor General. The Circuit Judge had been asked to see that Molony did not

"put any illegal or improper questions to the witness or make any harsh or irrelevant remarks upon their evidence",

and also did not

"communicate with him in any but the native languages so that all which passes between you may be intelligible to all present,"

Molony forwarded these directives, issued by his departmental head, direct to a superior authority, the Governor General in Council, adding

"The Government will, I trust ... be satisfied of the difficulty I have to encounter when placed under such restrictive orders."

Molony looks more natural as one enjoying the Supreme Authority's confidence in a special sense than as a very junior officer, which he was, writing to the Head of the Government.

It was also noticed that when the case was finally disposed of by Justice Smith, and Rammohun's son got his acquittal, Prosecutor Molony complained to the Governor General in Council that a miscarriage of justice had

occurred. And it was found that soon after this complaint Justice Smith was dismissed from service,—on a charge of little consequence.⁶ Maybe the judge's dismissal had nothing to do with his handling of the aforesaid case; but Rammohun and his friends could not but have misgivings on this score. Contemporary records show, they did have misgivings.⁷

(In some of the biographies of Rammohun Roy this persecution of his son has been presented as the "result of a deep laid conspiracy against the family of Rammohun Roy hatched by the party of Maharaja Tejchand of Burdwan, which probably succeeded in influencing some high-placed British Officers of the Company" like the Molonys.⁸ What appears to have been overlooked when making this assessment is the unusual action and reaction of Government officials much higher placed than Molonys.⁹ Those who got these particulars live and perhaps other pointers besides, arrived at different conclusions. For example, James Sutherland believed that the Court of Directors itself "had countenanced the persecution of a near relative [of Rammohun Roy's] by their servants."¹⁰

That was the remedy. As regards the response, to any casual surveyor it would have appeared to be spectacular. No sooner than it became known that the Government was not pleased with the aforesaid indoctrination programme and was planning to gag the press, its sponsors took to publicly voicing their appreciation of the British rule. Here is a representative sample.

Knowing fully well how selfish and callous had been the development programme systematically pursued by the British people in North America (the only major country they had till then developed outside Europe), they offered

"thanks to the Supreme Disposer of the universe for having unexpectedly delivered this country from the long continued tyranny of its former Rulers, and placed it under the Government of the English, a nation who not only are blessed with the enjoyment of civil and political liberty but also interest themselves in promoting liberty and social

happiness as well as free inquiry into literary and religious subjects among those nations to which their influence extends ;"

and "sincerely" prayed that "the blessings of British rule in India ... may continue in its beneficent operation for centuries to come."¹¹

The authorities ought to have felt more than happy and to have given up (or at least kept in abeyance) their programme of gagging the press. They did not. They had reasons. They found that the concerned people had changed their skins but not their insides. They found, for example, that Rammohun Roy, while loudly appreciating the advent of the British rule, was associating himself not with the administrators of that rule but with its avowed detractors,—for example, not with Hon'ble John Adam but with 'adventurer' Buckingham, and was furnishing the latter with material to get the Indian administration indicted before the Court of the East India Company's Proprietors.¹² They also found that while everybody agreed to accept the licensing system for running periodicals as per the new Press Regulation, Rammohun alone ceased to publish his *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* as a protest against it.¹³

The authorities also noticed the substantial differences between the preambles of Rammohun's representations and their operative parts. They found besides that his 1823 stand was more aggressive than what it was before. In 1822, for example, he had only obliquely suggested that the executive branch of the Indian Government should not exercise legislative power.¹⁴ In 1823 he formally asked the King-in-Council to

prohibit any authority in this country from assuming the legislative power ... "¹⁵

(Not much later he stipulated that even the King-in-Council should not assume the legislative power.)¹⁶

And lastly, the authorities saw, on the one hand, that Rammohun had predicted armed revolts by the people if the country was not conceded freedom of the press, and on the other, that the people here actually revolted within

about a year of denial of the freedom of the press.¹⁷ It was very probably what we call a case of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. But it could not be summarily ignored ; for, only that part of British India experienced armed risings which had been denied the freedom of the press,¹⁸ and of that part the area which got most convulsions was that which had received Rammohun Roy's political ministrations.¹⁹

CHAPTER 7

A PROPHECY COME TRUE.

The Indian Press was formally put under restrictions in April 1823. It was being controlled by executive fiat from some time in 1822.

In October 1823 an Indian, Rammohun Roy, observed :

"A Free Press has never yet caused a revolution in any part of the World. ... whereas, where no freedom of the press existed, and grievances consequently remained unrepresented and unredressed, innumerable revolutions have taken place in all parts of the globe ; or if prevented by the armed forces of the government, the people continued ready for insurrection."¹

Within about a year after the gagging of the Press, the entire region between the Indus on the west and the Brahmaputra on the east, appeared to be in excitement, the areas particularly affected being

Ajmere ; Benares ; Bharatpur ; Calcutta (there were rumours of "defeats sustained under the walls of Calcutta") ; Chittagong ("rumoured to have fallen") ; Comilla ('positively taken') ; Dacca (in panic) ; Delhi (raised cries "Company ka raj ho guia") ; Dungarpur ; Jaypur ("The Bengal Army" had to "be withdrawn and replaced by fresh troops from Poonah") ; Moradabad ; Oudh ('in a state of ferment') ; Rohilkhand ; Tippera ('the enemy had got into') ; Udaipur ; Ulwar.²

As per the assessment of an ex-Governor General, Lord Teignmouth (F. J. Shore),

"in the course of 1824 there was scarcely a district in the Upper Provinces in which a spirit of dissatisfaction was not more or less manifested."³

The authorities appear to have been for some time past "sitting upon a barrel of gunpowder", without noticing that anything was amiss. Bishop Heber, for example, had very smugly observed in January 1824 :

"Among the sepoys nobody seems to apprehend a breach of faith ... the peasantry and merchants are extremely well content with us and prefer our government very much to that of any existing Asiatic sovereign."⁴

In January next year he had to write (in a letter to Governor General Amherst) :

"I little suspected to how imminent a danger your lordship, your family and the Anglo-Indian State had been exposed from the extraordinary and lamentable mutiny at Barrackpur. I have now to congratulate you ... on your providential escape and your success in suppressing a spirit which threatened such ruinous consequences."⁵

By May 1825 even that success seemed to be of little worth. For the Bishop had found by that time that

'the attention of all India is fixed on the siege of Bhurtpur in Rajasthan, on the event of which far more than on any thing which may happen in the Birman empire, the renown of the British arms and the permanency of the British Empire in Asia must depend.'⁶

And it was not only his own personal assessment. He found the authorities to

'admit that should our army fail again, few events would go so near to fulfil the shouts of the mob a few months back in the streets of Delhi : Company ka raj ho guia, the rule of the Company is at an end ''

A maturer Heber then admitted :

"I have not been led to believe that our Government is generally popular or advancing towards popularity."⁸

The development which made the greatest impact on the Governor General, his lady, the Anglo-Indian State and the general body of British Nationals in India was that occurring in and around Calcutta (Barrackpur) in the second half of 1824. According to historians giving us the story later :

"Troubles had been brewing in the eastern frontier of India since the Burmese annexation of Assam, and war ultimately broke out in 1824. The sepoy had no objection to march through Assam and Arakan and travel overland to Burma ; but age-old customs forbade the Hindu to make a sea voyage and custom had with him the force of law. By the terms of his enlistment the Bengal Sepoy was not required to cross the sea. The Madras troops had sailed to Rangoon without demur but the Bengal Army had to be

marched to Chittagong and from there massed against the Burmese land frontier. The resources of the Government had been taxed to their utmost limits to find the necessary transport; and at last the 47th Regiment, stationed at Barrackpur and told off for the expedition, was ordered to find their own cart and bullocks. Obviously the sepoy could not hope to succeed where the Government had failed and the order was patently unfair. At this juncture a rumour spread that once at Chittagong, the regiment would have to embark whether it liked it or not, and the men were reluctant to leave the station, not knowing that one of the officers had offered to make the transport arrangements. Whether the news of the disaster at Ramu influenced their attitude remains a subject of conjecture, but it is an admitted fact that the sepoys were disaffected and refused to march. The sepoy dreaded the loss of his caste and the sufferings it involved and argued that he was not bound to do anything outside the terms of his agreement. The Commander-in-Chief, Sir Edward Paget, was a strong man. He was not prepared to stand any nonsense about social customs and religious superstitions. Nor was he willing to make any allowance for unreasonable fears. An order was an order and must be obeyed, and if the sepoy refused to obey he was guilty of indiscipline. Indiscipline in the army could not be tolerated at any time; in time of war it must be suppressed with an iron hand. The Commander-in-Chief marched in person to Barrackpur with European troops, paraded the regiments, admonished them for their folly and offered them the alternative of marching or grounding their arms. The sepoys however placed religion above discipline. They felt that they committed no offence in disobeying an order which was contrary to their contract. At the same time they did not contemplate any armed resistance.

"But their recalcitrance was not to go unpunished. At Paget's orders fire was opened upon the unfortunate men.

They had not even loaded their muskets and they fled pell-mell in surprised terror. The matter did not end there. The ringleaders were hanged, the 47th Regiment was disbanded, and its name was removed from the Army list. Discipline was thus sternly enforced, no further trouble immediately followed, but Barrackpur provided another instance of British indifference to the religious feelings of the sepoy. Technically, the sepoy had simply stood on his rights and gone no further. The authorities were certainly logical in their attitude but they forgot that logic does not always hold good in human affairs."

This is the story as we get it in all our history books starting with that given by James Mill, confirmed by H. H. Wilson.⁹ It is surprising that such a story has remained unchallenged. For, it is an impossible story.

Firstly, Paget was perhaps positively right that every indiscipline must be punished. But instant firing is not punishment. It is an extraordinary provision to meet an extraordinary situation. It is resorted to when there is an imminent risk of armed resistance. Historians have not so far claimed that the concerned sepoys had shown signs of armed resistance.¹⁰ In every other case of disobedience there are always several intermediate stages between an act of disobedience and its punishment. Those not obeying an order "to ground their arms" are disarmed ; arrested ; court martialled or otherwise judged ; and, if found resisting, are warned that force would be applied. No civilized government permits its military chief to fire upon any soldier, (especially at a base camp, hundreds of miles away from the battle field) immediately it is found that he has disobeyed an order and has raised certain objections.

Secondly, was Paget not only strong but also insane ? The 47th Regiment is supposed to have been ordered "to find their own cart and bullocks." The sepoys pointed out their inability to make such arrangements on their own. Thereupon Paget told them so many things but never that

'one of the officers had offered to make the transport arrangements." One wonders, why. (We are not imagining things. The assessment quoted above has: "the men were reluctant to leave the station *not knowing* that one of the officers had offered to make the transport arrangements.")

The sepoys are also said to have pointed out that they would lose their caste if eventually made to cross the sea as per the rumour. Paget and his deputies told them so many things, but never that the said rumour was false. One again wonders, why. (Here also we are not just exercising our power of imagination. When "the Right Honourable the Governor General in Council" felt "himself called on" to publish the details of the development in order to allay public feelings of resentment, he said not a word about this complaint at all, not even while listing the steps which had been "adopted [by Paget] to bring those misguided men to a sense of their duty.")¹¹

It is no explanation that "Barrackpur provided another instance of British indifference to the religious feelings of the sepoy." British empire-builders were never, at least in a body, so foolish as to ignore the importance of not hurting the religious feelings of the sepoys, when a war was on and they needed their enthusiastic help very badly. Nor it is enough to say that the order served on the soldiers to "find their own cart and bullocks" "was patently unfair". That order was an absurdity. No army chief has ever issued such orders at a time of urgency and when it was known that transport was not easily available. It was not a parlour game that Pagets were then playing. It was war, and at that a very difficult war. Wars cannot be, and are not, fought that way.

If the accepted story be true, the authorities would have tried to win over the sepoys by telling them that transport was being arranged by the Government and by assuring them that there was then no plan of sending anybody anywhere across the sea. Instead, they gave orders to fire upon them ;

and, after hanging the ring-leaders, "left their bodies hanging there bleached and rotting" to keep on reminding the rest of the people of "British indifference to ... [their] religious feelings !"

It stands to reason that if Amherst and Paget had acted as they did in the autumn of 1824, there must have been some compelling need of their having done so. According to them, and many others, they had a compelling need.

Some of the evidences relevant to the subject have been suppressed. Fortunately however what are still available are revealing enough. And these are from various sources giving the investigator an opportunity to check one with the others. We have for our consultation :

- (a) Government communiques issued at the time for public consumption.
- (b) Government notifications of military deployment covering the second half of 1824.
- (c) Proceedings of half a dozen Courts Martial held in November 1824.
- (d) Government officials testifying before various Committees in London.
- (e) Charges brought against the Local Government by its enemies in England based on particulars received from their friends in India.
- (f) His Majesty's Ministers' replies and counter charges in the House of Commons.
- (g) E I C Court of Directors' replies and counter charges in the Company's Court of Proprietors.
- (h) Private reports published in local papers then functioning under the 1823 Press Regulation.
- (i) Private reports, emanating from Calcutta, published in London where the press was free.
- (j) Personal letters exchanged between various Government officials as well as those between private persons, *e. g.*, letters of Sir Charles Metcalfe to Lord Amherst and those of Bishop Heber to his wife.

Evidences available so far run into about two hundred pages of this size. Some of them cancel each other. Some of them have been withdrawn on challenge; some again have withstood challenge. To save time and space, we are using in this chapter only those evidences which have either not been challenged when proffered or have withstood challenge.

On the 1st of November 1824 "only between three hundred and four hundred men [of the 47th Native Regiment] ... [were] on parade ; the rest remained behind the Bell of Arms with their accoutrements and their muskets loaded. On seeing this the General [Dalzell] rode upto them, whereupon they immediately charged, and drove him back to the Parade, and followed the act by rushing upon those who had already paraded and driving them back into the lines."¹²

Not only the 47th (Native Infantry) Regiment was involved, but two other Regiments also behaved outrageously, viz., the 26th and the 62nd Native Infantry.

"After gunfire in the evening [of Monday the 1st November] a body of the 62d Regiment suddenly rose ... rushed to the Quarter General, seized the Colours and carried them to a distance of a hundred yards to the front." Captain Ashe tried to bring the situation under control "until a sepoy rushed from beside the Colours and told him to be gone or his life would be taken ... the sepoy struck him twice and sought for a bayonet wherewith to assail him." Thereafter they "proceeded with the Colours and joined the 47th." "Much about the same time a small number of the 26th rose, seized upon the Colours and likewise joined the original [47th Regiment] mutineers "¹³

These charges were much more serious than raising the question of religious scruples when ordered to march. The latter Paget could have ignored if he was not a strict disciplinarian or was not indifferent "to the religious feelings of the sepoy." The former he could in no case have ignored without seriously compromising his position. These charges in respect of happenings on the 1st of November 1824 were never challenged.

It appears that even when the sepoy behaved so outrageously, the Army chiefs at Barrackpur took no action against them,—even those who had rough-handled General Dalzell or struck Capt. Ashe were not arrested or disarmed.

Nor was any attempt made to recover the Regimental Colours.

Such inaction on the part of those in charge at Barrackpur would have led us to conclude that nothing untoward had happened there on the 1st of November 1824, but for the fact that they had sent a report to the Commander-in-Chief at Calcutta and he had driven over a distance of 16 miles, arriving at Barrackpur some time about midnight. Since he had not considered it safe to wait till the morning, it is more than obvious that he had looked upon the developments reported as something very serious and urgent too. He had done more. He had not only made himself available at Barrackpur, but also arranged for certain European regiments and the artillery to be there,—and those also "*arrived during the night,*" and that was a cold November night. And then we read :

"the Battalion of His Majesty's Royal Regiment and some Artillery from Dum Dum took up a position in the rear of their [the sepoys'] quarters, while His Majesty's 47th Regiment, the Pody Guard and the 62d Regiment of Native Infantry formed in line on their left." "And daylight alone was waited for to put into execution those prompt and vigorous measures which His Excellency had already determined."¹⁴

Paget, it will be seen, proceeded as if he was at the front and was conducting a battle. Not only had the artillery and certain European regiments been brought to Barrackpur (and also put in position) under cover of the night, arrangements had been made by which the artillery men would themselves know when to open fire, without someone shouting out the order. The shelling was to start as soon as they heard two shots fired in quick succession. That was the pre-arranged signal. And it worked nicely.

"On Tuesday morning the whole of the troops were drawn up in position and the mutineers were likewise in a line of their own, apparently as resolute as ever. General Dalzell was then sent to desire them to lay down their arms and to point out what would be the immediate consequences of their refusal. They replied that they had sworn not to surrender and that therefore they would not, which being reported to His Excellency, two signal guns were fired ... and agreeably to previous orders the Artillery under Captain Webb opened on them

from the rear ; ... they ... immediately fled, receiving a volley from the Royals who afterwards pursued and continued sniping all the morning."¹⁵

This account, published as an eye-witness evidence in a Calcutta paper, was not only never challenged locally (where a challenge might have entailed risk,) but it found ample corroboration in private letters from India published in London papers. Nor was its veracity, in respect of the portions reproduced by us, ever questioned by any of the critics of the Calcutta and the London authorities. As for the said authorities, they solidly backed each and every part of this eye-witness account.¹⁶

We get besides from the proceedings of the first Court Martial held on 2nd November 1824 that the concerned sepoys had "refused to march from Barrackpur ... until certain illegal and insubordinate demands should be first conceded to them,"¹⁷ For the nature and the extent of those "illegal and insubordinate demands" we have to turn to the President of the Board of Control, Mr. Wynn, who thus spoke on the subject :

"Even at the last moment ... what demands did they make ? Why, that they should either [a] receive double pay and that the two subahdars should be given up to them to be put to death ; or [b] they should be allowed to depart to their homes."¹⁸

And Mr. Wynn does not appear to have over-stated his case. According to private letters from India, published in London, "amongst other demands of the corps, two were that the Serjeant Major should be hanged and Lt. Col. Cartwright dismissed from service."¹⁹

The situation was such that when "the mutineers were called upon to send to headquarters a deputation of two men from each company to declare for what grievances they complained," "they asked how they were to be satisfied that those men should be safely sent back to them." Thereupon "Col. Cartwright himself offered to remain as a hostage for their safe return."²⁰

When a Commander-in-Chief has to permit hostages to

be offered to bring recalcitrant sepoys to the negotiating table, it means that he has lost control of the situation, that he should either abdicate or re-establish his authority beyond anybody's doubt. On the other hand, when recalcitrant soldiers, invited to come to the negotiating table, stipulate that certain officers of the army should first be hanged, it is understood that they do not expect to be serving under that command again, that the point of no return has been reached.

Another aspect, which is of no less importance, deserves our attention. It is about the difficulty of procuring bullock carts and draught cattle. Was there really and actually an acute shortage of bullocks and bullock carts? It is difficult to believe that there was. Thousands of sepoys were then, almost weekly, arriving at Calutta—Barrackpur, destined to be sent to the Arakan front and to this or that intermediate station at short notice. The need of bullocks and bullock carts and the extent of that need was known to the army authority, and at any specific moment hundreds of carts with necessary bullocks were definitely available at or around Barrackpur,—those which had arrived there carrying the belongings of the incoming troops. What prevented the Army Commissariat to requisition those to meet the more pressing need of the 47th Native Regiment? Only one explanation covers the development,—that the cartmen refused compliance and by their non-cooperation kept ineffective a large part of the striking power of the Indian Army. A Calcuttan, writing soon after the incident, claimed that "in other parts of the country, some of them not very distant from Calcutta ... they [necessary cattle] might easily have been either purchased or hired in sufficient numbers."²¹ What however clinches the issue is that after the sepoy resistance was broken, bullocks and carts became easily available.²²

It is this ugly look which led a frightened Bishop to write to Governor General Amherst, of the danger to which

"Your Lordship, your family and the Anglo-Indian State had been exposed."²³ It was this development which made a startled President of the Board of Control to declaim :

"If it [the mutiny] had been suffered to go on, he would not say for a day but for an hour, taking all the circumstances of the case into consideration,—that during the period a great number of native regiments were present with arms in their hands and that no man could tell the moment when they might turn those arms against their officers,—if the mutiny should not be instantaneously quelled, who was there who would not say that the measures resorted to were not justifiable and also necessary ?"²⁴

And it was this development again which induced a Secretary of the Bengal Government of the period to testify :

"The broad and substantial fact of a most serious and dangerous mutiny having existed in the Native Regiments at Bengal, justified Sir Edward Paget in what he did "²⁵

It is not beyond probability that Bishop Heber was, in January 1825, too frightened to realise what he was saying ; that President Wynn, in March 1827, had lied *pro bono publico* ; that Secretary Lushington, at the same time, had said what was expected of him. But in no wise can we get over the fact that if this fear of "a most serious and dangerous mutiny" was a reality, (and in that context alone) every other piece falls into position,—making advance preparation, keeping the artillery in abmuscade, talking of the failure of the sepoys' plan, meeting disobedience with instant firing without going through the customary intermediate stages (of giving warning, forcibly disarming, arresting etc.), keeping bodies hanging on the parade ground 'exposed in chains to keep up the memory of this melancholy affair'.

It has sometimes been suggested that President Wynn and/or his informants had lied to save the face of their Indian administration. This explanation is inadequate. Lying no doubt was, and is, a permitted weapon in the hands of empire builders. But the lying theory in this case does not explain why Bishop Heber felt so much frightened, why British nationals in Calcutta sent their family to the Fort

for protection, why Commander-in-Chief Paget hurried to Barrackpur in the dead of a November night, why one of his Colonels had to offer himself as a hostage to induce the recalcitrant sepoys to come to the negotiating table, why guns were kept camouflaged, why no warning could be given before firing started. This list of oddities can be, at least, doubled. It is only if we accept Secretary Lushington's assessment that "a most serious and dangerous mutiny had developed", that we can accommodate all the portents listed above.

The Barrackpur development got more space in the contemporary papers because it was hotly debated upon in the East India Company's Court of Proprietors as also in the British Parliament. For our study, we have to consider in one sweep all the various developments which convulsed the country during the years 1824-25.

Those developments, coming up one after the other,—sometimes simultaneously also,—startled and frightened the Government of Lord Amherst. At one time,—and that time was more than a year long,—the situation looked almost nightmarish. And while, in England, Amherst was being pilloried and ridiculed and presented as imbecility personified; in India, he was being hailed as the saviour of the Second British Empire by no less a person than Bishop Reginald Heber. What saved Amherst and the Empire was his doggedness and the absence of any alternative. He survived the crisis and won in the last round. And a new English Lord was born,—the Lord of Arakan.

It is today merely of academic interest to speculate as to what would have happened if Amherst had developed cold feet and Paget become 'considerate' when sepoys at Barrackpur went out of hand or when their counterparts at the Burma fronts got bogged. In 1824-25 it looked like a matter of life and death for the Empire.

CHAPTER 8

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

What did they aim at? Those who challenged the authority of the "strongest single striking force in this part of the world"? According to historians, they wanted to go to Burma by the land route and not across the sea; they wanted increased allowance; they wanted carts and draught cattle for carrying their baggage; those in Central India wanted to be left free to deprive their relatives of their just inheritance. If we consult contemporary evidences, those were mere eye-wash; what most, if not all, of them wanted, was to drive their foreign rulers out of their country.

As, on the one hand, this point is of vital importance to our study and, on the other, is against the 'consensus', we take the liberty of quoting the relevant evidences even at the risk of sometimes repeating ourselves. And to put the thing in a clearer focus, we preface it with a standard assessment.

We get from our historians: "The early reverses and difficulties of the British in Burma gave rise to a conviction in certain quarters that the British dominion was faced with impending ruin. This resulted in risings in some places. In Bharatpur, the claim of the minor son of a deceased ruler, who had been placed on the throne with the consent of Sir David Ochterlony, the British Resident at Delhi, was contested by his cousin, Durjan Sal. Lord Amherst at first followed a policy of non-intervention. ... [The next Resident] Sir Charles Metcalfe urged the necessity of vindicating the prestige of the British Government by opposing the pretensions of the usurper and won over the Governor-General to his view. An expedition was eventually sent under Lord Combermere, who in January 1826, stormed the fortress of Bharatpur. ... Durjan Sal was deported. Another disturbance that demands

notice was the mutiny of the sepoy at Barrackpore, which 'was only quelled after the mutinous regiments had been fired upon by the British artillery and the parade-ground made a shambles.'" In this expert assessment, which is representative of all other past assessments of the mid-1820s, there is not a single word about how India's millions reacted when they heard of the "conviction in certain quarters that the British dominion was faced with impending ruin."

We have all along accepted this type of assessments as adequate, because we have all along been told and believed that India's millions never cared a whit about the political conditions of their country, that to them it mattered little whether they were ruled by their own people, or by the British, or by any other people. (Earlier, we used to get that India's millions were very particular about being ruled by the British. For some years past, only the westernised part of Indians are being presented as admirers and advocates of British domination.)

If, however, we put aside assessments made subsequent to Malcolm's and others' injunctions to "inquire no further" because the rulers were "sitting upon gunpowder", and take for our guidance assessments made during the period 1821-25 itself, we get an altogether different picture. Malcolm himself told the Proprietors of the East India Company, in a publicly reported speech, that Indians in general were very much excited about the political conditions of their country. He said so in July 1824 on the basis of his personal experience of India during the preceding 25 years.¹ Another administrator said the same thing in a private letter to Governor General Amherst. He said so in June 1824.² So had several other British dignitaries of the period. And they all had been referring not to this and that dispossessed and disgruntled native potentate, but to India's millions.

Before we discuss this excitement further we should do

well to take a closer look at "the convictions" of the period "that the British dominion was faced with impending ruin".

Here is what a man very close to the Government of the time (believed in some quarters to be the Governor General himself writing anonymously) said in September 1825 :

'There has been a very prevalent belief that our Raj was drawing to a close ... Predictions of our downfall were greedily circulated. The native akhbars teemed with accounts of defeats sustained under the walls of Calcutta. Last year [1824] these reports produced only partial disturbances ... but I fear that this year, after the Dussara, we are to expect some more serious and extreme commotions.'³

And we get from Governor General Amherst writing under his own name :

"Should the Burmese at any time determine upon invading the British territory by way of the Brahmaputra, previous intelligence of their designs ... could not be obtained ... in sufficient time to be of any avail; .. they might reach Dacca in 15 days from the time of their arrival on the banks of the upper part of the river and in 5 from that of their appearance on our frontier at Goalpara."⁴

Lord Amherst lamented thus even before he had heard the rumour that the Burmese were in collusion with several Indian chiefs.

If we analyse Indian reaction to the "prevalent belief that our Raj was drawing to a close", we find a 'constant.' Indians in general *hopefully* looked forward to this possible turn of events. We get :

"All India at all times is looking out for our downfall." "The intelligence [of reverses suffered] spreads like wild fire and immediately excites the hopes and speculations of the millions whom we hold in subjection."

"Circular letters and proclamations are dispersed over the country with celerity that is incredible ... [and] are read with avidity."

Delhi streets resounded with cries of "Company ka raj ho gya, the rule of the Company is at an end."⁵

Comments are superfluous save to point out that in the 'circulars' and 'proclamations' and 'predictions' there is no reference to any Rajah or Nawab or Badshah taking over after the rule of the Company collapsed. It was

always that tyranny was to end, that oppression was to be a thing of the past. Appeals were issued never in the name of this or that potentate, nor ever addressed to any of that tribe. It was always either the common people or the common sepoys who were being exhorted to murder their oppressors, and those who felt excited were India's millions. And it is not without significance that when the Barrackpur mutiny broke out no native prince was blamed, nor was any of them penalised when it was suppressed.

As stated earlier, the Barrackpur Mutiny was but one of the many developments. The barbaric, or if we prefer, the heroic, treatment laid Barrackpur prostrate. But it sufficed not to make the country quiet. No sooner than the sepoys at Barrackpur developed cold feet and gave up the struggle, "secret war ... by numerous though unseen hands" again started, (or maybe it had been going on all the time).

Contemporary evidences taken jointly indicate that "innumerable private letters ... conveyed intelligence of" the Barrackpur development "to every part of the country", not highlighting the submission of the sepoys as per the guideline provided and enjoined by the Government, but giving "accounts of defeats sustained under the walls of Calcutta."⁶ And these went on exciting the people with hopes and speculations. And the Government could do precisely nothing to counter this adverse and patently false propaganda by interested people,—the "unseen and numerous hands". For the country knew that the Press was functioning under Government control and the Government had asked everybody to circulate nothing outside the official handouts. In the circumstances the people at large believed more readily whatever was at variance with the picture presented in those handouts.

Verily, the Press Regulation of 1823 played a not insignificant part in rousing India against the British,—by creating an immense and unbridgeable credibility gap between

the Government and the people. Had the people believed what the authorities were saying so loudly about the outcome of the mutiny at Barrackpur, very few would perhaps have dared to rise against the British so soon after the reverses suffered by the sepoys there. But the people believed that not the rebellious sepoys but the Government had then suffered defeats "under the walls of Calcutta". And, as a result, instead of getting that the other parts of India were frightened and became submissive on receipt of the Barrackpur news, we get :⁷

"the tottering state of our Empire in the East is extending a general spirit of resistance from Bhurtpore to the western confines of India,"

"The British Resident had found it necessary to leave the Fort of Jaypore on account of the measures adopted by Ranee."

"The Political Agent had been obliged to leave Ajmere and that the Nusserabad Field Force would probably have to move in that direction."

"All eyes are now turned on Bhuripore ... But it is not merely against Bhurtpore that Lord Combermere has taken so large an army [of 80,000 men] but to be prepared for whatever rebellious combinations may take place among Jauts, Rajpoots, Mahrattas or Seiks."

"A great rising was apprehended in the Upper Provinces, the inhabitants of which are known to be both the warlike portion of India and most disposed to resist our authority whenever there may be a hope of doing so with success."

"Bhurtpore raised the standard of revolt summoning every spark of independence that yet remained in Hindoostan to make one effort more to redeem India from a foreign yoke".

"The disaffected Natives of India [were trying] to throw off the yoke of their foreign conquerors and oppressors and drive the English entirely from the country."

When C. W. W. Wynn, speaking as the President of the Board of Control, denied the charge that during the years 1824-25 Native Powers had shown any disposition to oppose the British, J. S. Buckingham, writing as the spokesman of the 1826-28 Indian agitation for political rights, asked :

"But what does Malcolm and other writers of India declare to be the constant feeling of the Natives, then meditation by day and then dreams by night but schemes for the expulsion or extermination of the British race ?"⁸

It was against this sombre background that Proprietor Malcolm raised his voice and told his brother Proprietors of the East India Company :

"Inquire no further. You are sitting upon gunpowder. It is your fate to be there. And you will incur less danger in remaining where you are than in publishing what will spread far and wide the disloyalty of your army".⁹

Malcolm is no more. Nor the British are now sitting upon gunpowder in India. But apparently our old habit persists. And we never accommodate in our histories dealing with the period, even as an odd piece of curio, that somebody ever thought in 1825 :

Indians were raising "the standard of revolt summoning every spark of independence that yet remained in Hindoostan to make one effort more to redeem India from a foreign yoke ;"

or that some people said : Give the Indians Freedom of the Press ? "The first use that would be made of such a gift would be to turn their foreign masters out of the country ;"¹⁰ or that anybody ever said even jokingly in the 1820s : Indian people's 'meditations by day' and 'dreams by night' were but "schemes for the expulsion or extermination of the British race."¹¹

"ALL WAS LOST SAVE HONOUR"

Is it possible to identify anybody who was involved in the "secret war against our authority",—as Malcolm put it ? Or, anybody involved in circulating news of British handi-caps, which spread "like wild fire" and excited India's millions with "hopes and speculations",—as given out by Metcalfe ? Or, anybody involved in carrying on subversive propaganda in areas in which convulsions were later found concentrated,—as noted by Lord Teignmouth ?¹

As far as can be seen now, many of those propagandists can no longer be identified. And it looks doubtful that we shall ever know them by name or even by group affiliation. Fortunately, however, some of them can still be identified with certainty. Put alphabetically, they are : Gowreechurn Bonnerjee, Hurchunder Ghose, Jogunnouth Mugmoodvre, Rammohun Roy, Chundercoomar Tagore, Dwarkanath Tagore, Prusunnocoomar Tagore,—*Hindus* ; Monte D' Rozario, Peter Stone D' Rozario, Viliers Holcroft, J. F. Sandys,—*Eurasians* ; Sandford Arnot, James Silk Buckingham, Theodore Dickens, James Sutherland,—*Europeans*.²

The content of the propaganda carried on by some of those listed above has been presented and discussed earlier.³ Taken jointly, they propagated that : Despotism was the worst form of government and "a monarchical government limited by the national voice" was the best ; England even dethroned and murdered their kings to get this form of government ; India also did the same in her golden age ; and, currently, all over the world despotic rulers were being driven out or exterminated through armed risings. There was perhaps something vague and ambiguous about the end ; but there was nothing either vague or ambiguous about the means. Every precept and every example pointed out to armed risings.

Another question emerges at this stage, this propaganda in favour of armed risings,—was it in any way responsible for the armed risings which actually convulsed the country in 1824-25? This question is patently of a kind that can never be answered categorically. We propose therefore to draw attention to certain indicators and leave our readers to draw their own conclusions.

According to the on-the-spot investigation made by Secretary Bayley in 1822, Rammohun Roy and his political associates had then been carrying on subversive propaganda amongst the natives. And, according to Bayley, there was “nothing in the tone of what has already appeared to indicate any such timidity or delicacy on the part of [them] as should restrain them from advancing step by step to the end which they or their patrons obviously contemplate.”⁴ And a study of the content of the media employed by Rammohun Roy and his political associates at the time, show that they were canvassing the idea of ‘armed risings to pull down undesirable governments. That was in 1821, 1822, 1823. Armed risings occurred in 1824-25.

According to Bayley’s reports as also according to announcements in Rammohun Roy’s *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*, Rammohun Roy and his group had concentrated their subversive propaganda especially in the Upper Provinces, and local administrators there apprehended trouble if it was allowed to continue. And, according to Lord Teignmouth as also various other commentators, “in the course of 1824 there was scarcely a district in Upper Provinces in which a spirit of dissatisfaction was not more or less manifested.”⁵

Negatively, when the sepoy s looked restive, when rumours spread that “All the [European] inhabitants of Barrackpur” would be put to death, when non-official British nationals panicked, when the officials expected an armed rising, when Bishop Heber became apprehensive about the safety of the Anglo-Indian State,—not a single Native came forward and affirmed that he looked upon the British rule

as something good, not even Rammohun Roy who during the preceding twelve months, (when it was quite unnecessary to do so,) had made at least five avowals to the effect that the said rule was a great blessing.

Positively, when a negotiated settlement was in sight, Rammohun Roy, who was one of the sponsors of the 1820-23 indoctrination programme and who had been found by the government guilty of propagating subversive ideas in the Upper Provinces, pleaded for special treatment of the people of those very areas. He held out the prospect of raising a 'People's Militia' from amongst the people of the Upper Provinces, where in 1824-25, "there was scarcely a district ... in which a spirit of dissatisfaction was not more or less manifested."⁶

And even while the rebel sepoys lay prostrate under the heavy punishment inflicted upon them, Calcuttans including one who looks like a carbon copy of Rammohun Roy, came forward and presented the rebels as innocent sufferers, and the Government officials as merciless barbarians. These condemnations of government measures, circulated in India *via* England, are still available in their original prints.⁷ If any had been circulated in India directly also, it has not yet come to light.

For obvious reasons political letters sent at the time from India to England and published there, were written either anonymously or under assumed names. The longest, so far traced, was published immediately following a communication from the Indian Memorialists against the Press Regulation of 1823. It was from a native, —a Hindu ; a resident of Calcutta ; one who knew English, who resented that the Indian Press was not free ; who was highly critical of the Calcutta Paper *John Bull* and of the Amherst Government ; who desired that the executive and the legislative branches of government should be independent of each other ; who loudly avowed his appreciation of the British rule provided it was not exercised arbitrarily ;

who was a correspondent of J. S. Buckingham ; and who signed as 'Jogunnouth Mugmoodvre.'⁸ We all know that Calcutta of the 1820s had one person satisfying all the points of this specification except that of the signature, viz., Rammohun Roy. It is far easier to believe that Rammohun Roy and Jogunnouth Mugmoodvre were one and the same person, than to believe that Calcutta of the time had two such persons and that one of them has remained unknown to everybody. Also to be noted that this Mugmoodvre letter was published along with a letter of Rammohun Roy (as a memorialist against the 1823 Press Regulation.)

Jogunnouth Mugmoodvre, writing soon after 8 November 1824, described the Government handouts on the Barrackpur development as "quite vague and unsatisfactory" and as "far from correct." He claimed that the concerned sepoys had committed no wrong beyond asking for "an increase of batta", and added :

"as they continued to insist upon their [just] claim, the other troops were commanded to fire upon them, which they did accordingly, dispersing and cutting to pieces the whole regiment ; and thus fell without resistance or were afterwards put to death between four and five hundred men, by the hands of their fellow soldiers. A war which has given rise to so lamentable an occurrence would require some strong justification."

And on the point of this required "strong justification", Mugmoodvre had remarked earlier : "From the very face of the declaration of war, it is manifest that it was by no means a necessary one."

To drive home the point that because of this totally unnecessary war the British had lost the confidence of the people, he made quite a Rammohunian use⁹ of logic when he wrote :

"One of them [the local newspapers] called by the name of *John Bull* and distinguished by its adulation of the local authorities, has been labouring with extraordinary diligence to persuade the monied men here to accept of the terms of a four per cent loan opened to supply the exigencies of the war, and although others dared not publicly

express how different their sentiments were, what the community in general felt on this subject has been proved by the event; the failure of this financial project."

This Mugmoodvre communication, addressed formally to President of the Board of Control, C. W. W. Wynn and published as an open letter in the October-December 1825 issue of Buckingham's paper *Oriental Herald*, caused a memorable change of direction in the attitude of a particular group of London people, that comprising Joseph Hume, Leicester Stanhope, James Silk Buckingham and others friendly to the Calcutta group of politicians. Till then Hume and his associates had been criticising the war efforts of the Amherst Government in general terms, calling attention to its inefficiency. From about this time they added a new dimension to their bill of charge against the said Government. They accused it of inhumanity. In doing so they looked extremely strange. Indian sepoys had mutinied; frightened and demoralised Englishmen had sent their families to the Calcutta Fort for protection; they had raised a militia of their own, for they could no longer rely on the strength and/or loyalty of the regular military; army officers had been manhandled by those rebel sepoys; British flags had been pulled down and openly insulted. And it was found that certain identified sons of England were holding up the punished mutineers as innocent martyrs and virtually branding the government personnel dealing with them as beastly butchers. They even tried to make it difficult for the British Nationals in Calcutta to raise and maintain a militia for their protection.¹⁰ In 1819-20 England had coined the expression 'Peterloo Massacre'. In 1825-27 these people gave currency to the expression 'Barrackpur Massacre'.¹¹

Going back to Mugmoodvre, what however gives his letter a place in history is that, at a time when the Government of India was engaged in a critical struggle, a native of India formally proposed to the Supreme Government

in Great Britain that India's Governor General be divested of all but his purely executive powers. And he made this astounding suggestion not about Lord Amherst 'the inefficient' alone, but about all future heads of the Indian Government. According to his proposal, the higher and effective authority should vest in a Council of "twelve to twenty persons" more or less permanently residing in India. (To put the record straight, we should add that he did not suggest that they should be natives.)

As this proposal was the first of its kind to be made in or about India, and has few parallels on the point of audacity, we repeat it in Mugmoodvre's own words :

"There is something extremely defective in the constitution of the present system of rule in India. ... As each successor [Governor General] to whose hands the supreme power happens to fall, introduces new rules and principles of government, according to his taste and pleasure ; amid this perpetual fluctuation the people have nothing on which they can fix their minds ; all is loose, shifting and precarious in its aspect ; and there is nothing to give permanent stability to the British Rule. In fact, everything depends on the character of an individual, the same as it did under the Moguls' reign, the fate of which ought to be a lesson to their successors !

"Instead of this vacillating system wherein the most ancient and approved maxims of administration are continually liable to be sacrificed to the ignorance or caprice of every inexperienced newcomer, I would suggest that the whole affair of the country be placed under the superintendence of a Council, composed of twelve to twenty persons of talent and experience, as the civil and military gentlemen, who from long residence are well versed in the affairs of this country. If the Governor General or Captain General were intrusted merely with the executive power, subject to the control of this body, we might then expect to see wisdom, consistency and regularity in the measures of Government."

This was an extremely audacious suggestion. If acted upon, this would have made the "Governor General or Captain General" more handicapped than Warren Hastings as he was before Pitt's India Act of 1784. Hastings was a member, the first member, of a Council of Four, which was then entrusted with the supreme authority in India.

Under the Mugmoodvre proposal, the executive head was not to be even an ordinary member of the Supreme Council. It was not made less audacious by the writer's pointed reference to the fate of the Mughal rulers.

As we see it, the Mugmoodvre proposal was an unworkable one. Its only importance lies in the fact that a native had openly proposed that the head of the Indian Government be reduced to a mere executive to carry out orders given him by a body of which he was not to be even an ordinary member.

To get a measure of the audacity evinced by the writer of this letter, we should bear in mind that at the time when he made this suggestion to cripple the authority of the Head of the Government of India, either the fate of his own family (if he was Rammohun Roy himself) or the fate of the family of a native of Calcutta known to everybody (if he was someone other than Rammohun Roy) was lying at the mercy of the said Head of the Government.¹²

Mugmoodvre showed his audacity in other respects also.

He said : "But should the official accounts differ in any particular from mine, I pledge myself, that my statements will be found on inquiry to agree most exactly with the truth", thus challenging the veracity of the government handouts. He added that "the Government prohibited the real facts from being stated in public papers."

He referred to the account in which the Government proclaimed "to the world that the war is carried on without occasioning any distress to the Native population" and added "even the population of Calcutta is pressed into the service of the state, the people being laid hold of in the streets and forcibly carried away from their home and compelled to go on expedition against the Burmese."

And after recounting some of the wrongs done by the Government, he asked : Under these circumstances "can anything else be expected than that ... its troops become

mutinous and the subjects generally disaffected ?" It was only one step short of urging the troops to mutiny.

Apparently, even if Mugmoodvre was not Rammohun Roy, and had no share in fomenting trouble in the Upper Provinces and amongst the sepoy community, he had decided to adopt the baby as his own after the terrible and wanton killings at Barrackpur. Mugmoodvre and his people took immense risk. Insurrections were not parlour games. Nor espousing the cause of insurrectionists. Gowans, Humes and Buckinghams could play it ; they were in London and outside the reach of the Company's minions. How dared Mugmoodvres, living in the Company's Calcutta, show such recklessness ? Did not they realise that even if the editor of the *Oriental Herald* remained dumb, internal evidence alone would sufficiently disclose their identity and could bring the hangmen to their door ?

To continue the story, nothing availed. Neither distortion of facts,—talking of victories in the midst of defeats ; nor proving that the Government had lost the confidence of the people by referring to the failure of the 4 per cent loan ; nor showing recklessness as exemplified above, could turn the scale. In about six months' time after the Barrackpur treatment the British started winning on the Burma fronts ; the opposition there totally collapsed soon after. The Burma Government accepted a humiliating treaty by February 1826. That was on the east. On the west, in Central India, only Bharatpur continued to defy the British. Even there the situation soon changed favourably for the latter. In early 1825, when Ochterlony had tried to "impose the British will on the Raja of Bharatpur at the point of the sword," Lord Amherst had pulled him back. Towards the end of the year Commander-in-Chief Lord Combermere was given the green signal to go forward ; and he went forward and stormed the fortress of Bharatpur in January 1826. Soon after he returned to the capital to be the hero of many a gala night there.

Peace returned, in the wake of victory after victory on the side of the rulers. On the side of the ruled, all appeared to be lost. Indian sepoy could not liquidate their European tyrants, as exhorted by unidentified instigators. Indian people could not repeat the performance of Sage Parasuram and his followers, as recalled to them by Rammohun Roy. The Press Regulation was not repealed as petitioned by six Calcuttans. The Governor General was not divested of his legislative powers and a Council of twelve or twenty was not put in permanent charge of India, as suggested by Mugmoodyre. Bharatpur, the last bastion of Indian resistance, fell on 18 January 1826 and with its fall crumbled into dust "the hopes and speculations of the millions."

"All was lost save honour,"—we read in other people's histories. In the case of Indians the loss was total; it included honour also. Durjan Sal of Bharatpur lives in history as a cheat and a usurper; the Barrackpur sepoy live as superstitious fanatics. And those who, in the 1820s, were accused of spreading disaffection to the British regime, appear in history books as advocates of foreign domination. Their descendants of today boast that their forefathers were wise enough to believe that if India was to emerge as one nation, she must first be conquered afresh by an alien people, as if she had never before tried that recipe for becoming a nation. And Jogunnouth Mugmoodyre is not even a name to us. And when today's historians come across certain Bengalees of the 1820s praising the indigo planters (and the free traders,) they write: "Comment is superfluous save to point out that there was at least one great Bengali who appreciated the noble service rendered by the indigo planters to benefit the hapless Bengal peasants."¹⁸ Comment is superfluous save to point out that the 1820s knew that when Rammohun Roy and Dwarkanath Tagore were hailing the indigo planters as India's best friends, they were doing no more than repaying

a debt of honour. When Barrackpur and India lay prostrate under the 1824 treatment, it was the indigo planters (and the free traders) who alone amongst the British stood up for the hapless sons of India,—those who had braved the wrath of the strongest single striking force in this part of the world.

CHAPTER 10

"OUT OF THE ASHES"

If we avail ourselves of the conducted tours arranged during the following fifty years and longer by the Public Relations Officers of the East India Company and by the historians who took their cue from them, we find that the period 1824-26 was one of 'No politics' for Indians. We find, they did thousand and one things during those years but never even whispered anything about throwing off "the yoke of their foreign conquerors and oppressors."

If, however, we bypass the conducted tours and take independent walks by ourselves, we get a different picture. Indians of the period then appear to have done something which frightened men like Heber, Malcolm and Metcalfe ; which, in November 1824, counselled Paget to be cautious and to forego disciplinary action even when,

"a body of the 62d Regiment suddenly rose, in number about one hundred and fifty, rushed to the Quarter Guard, seized the colours and carried them to a distance of a hundred yards. ... [Some of them] struck him [Captain Ashe] twice and sought for a bayonet wherewith to assail him ;"¹

which, in March-April 1825, counselled Amherst to pull back Ochterlony when he wanted to go and teach Durjan Sal manners ; which, recalled to attention, enabled Wynn, in March 1827, to silence the critics of the Barrackpur treatment.²

Historians are not unaware of this picture of widespread risings in India of the period. But to them those were local troubles arising out of local resentments or inspired by local ambitions. They overlook that the period was 1824-25, when, even after meeting the demands of the Burma fronts, Lord Amherst's government had at its disposal a striking force of about 150,000 soldiers equipped with the latest type of military hardware. Neither the Rajah and the Ranee of

Bharatpur and Jaypur, nor the chieftains of Ajmer, Alwar, Dungarpore, Moradabad and several other places, nor the disgruntled sepoy's assembled at Barrackpur, were naive enough to ever believe that any of them could solve a local problem by a local victory. Bharatpur could venture to defy Ochterlony and Combermere if only Durjan Sal could expect, rightly or wrongly, that his said defiance would encourage all or a good number of his neighbours to rise against the British power and bring it to its knees. Native Regiment No. 47 N. I. could stipulate insolent pre-conditions for negotiating with their Commander-in-Chief, if only they, rightly or wrongly, believed that other regiments at Barrackpur would follow suit. We must never forget that everyone of them realised what awaited them if they failed not in this or that skirmish but in the last struggle. (Knowledgeable people will no doubt remember that in 1807 also Bharatpur successfully resisted British attempts to subdue her, and so Durjan Sal in 1825 might have expected to attain the same success by his own efforts. They need remember alongside that 1825 was not 1807; that in the meantime the British under Lord Hastings had subdued the Rajputs and the Mahrattas and had made a satisfactory arrangement with the Nepalese; also that in the meantime Congreave and Parlbay had developed their rocket guns. Amherst hesitated to lend support to Ochterlony in the first half of 1825, primarily, (not because the Bharatpur fortress was considered impregnable nor because a part of his forces was in, or en route to, Burma, but) because he feared "that this year [1825] after the Dussera we are to expect some more serious and extreme commotions" in many parts of India. Amherst gave the green signal to Combermere only after the 1825 Dussera was over.)

What happened in 1824-25 in Central and Upper India and in Lower Bengal (Barrackpur) were political events, which British administrators and observers of the time

looked upon as Indian attempts to "throw off the yoke of their foreign conquerors and oppressors." "The intelligence" of those events, they observed, spread "like wild fire and immediately" excited "the hopes and speculations of the millions" the British held "in subjection".

Calcutta of the period, as drawn in our historical and biographical literature, looks even more innocent. Historians at least know that Bharatpur and Barrackpur gave some sort of trouble to the British power. Nobody looks like even remotely suspecting that Calcutta of the years 1824-26 gave any trouble to its rulers. According to all studies on the period, Calcuttans then acted the 'best behaved boys'. Here are a few revealing samples of their behaviour in 1824 and 1825 as recorded in our histories and biographies.

In 1823 Calcuttans had run an agitation for getting rescinded the newly imposed Press Regulation. One of their memorials has been honoured by an English valuer as a Miltonian Areopagitica.³ But there is not a single mention anywhere what the sponsors of that Areopagitica did when it was unceremoniously brushed aside by the London authorities. Apparently they did nothing. Calcuttans, at least some of them, are known to have strongly resented the denial of civil rights to the Irish on religious grounds.⁴ But there is not a single mention anywhere that Calcuttans ever even whispered disapproval when it was widely rumoured, (truth was then in government custody,) that British tommies had been let loose on unarmed Indians,—men, women and children,—because certain sepoys had refused, on religious grounds, to go to Burma across the sea.⁵ Nor is anybody known to have said anything when Calcutta heard that soldiers sent to liberate Burma were ransacking Burmese pagodas and disembowelling Burmese Buddhas.⁶

And, according to all our literature, the most audacious thing-Indians ever did during the next three years, was to

petition the British authorities for a second consideration of the Indian Jury Act. Nobody in today's India ever brags that his grandfather or some other ancestor of his had been a juror, or that his son hopes to achieve that honour before he dies. But almost every Indian records with pride that his forefathers of the 1820s refused to be at rest until and unless they had been made fullfledged jurors.⁷ And that was at a time when all over the world other peoples in subjection and other peoples despotically ruled were risking their everything to achieve independence and political freedom. Calcuttans of the years 1824-28, as drawn in our literature, would have looked exceedingly funny if they did not look utterly contemptible.

If however we bypass the literature written as per the specifications laid down by the Public Relations Officers of those days, and look around by ourselves, we find that Calcuttans of the years 1824-28 did something more besides accepting khelats and khetabs, writing Bengali grammars, and aspiring to be Grand Jurors. J. F. Sandys, a Eurasian, risked his livelihood as editor of the *Calcutta Journal* and published Leicester Stanhope's paper on the Freedom of the Press. He lost his livelihood; the paper was axed. That was in 1823-24.⁸ Monte D' Rozario, another Eurasian, did something which so infuriated the Government that they cancelled his licence to run the *Columbian Press Gazette*. That was in 1825-26.⁹ Rammohun Roy sent materials to his London friends to get the Adam and the Amherst governments censured by the East India Company's Court of Proprietors. That was in 1824.¹⁰ When the government tightened its security measures, robed as Jogunnouth Mugmoodvre, he wrote a castigation of the Amherst Government and a brief that the rebel sepoys had done nothing wrong and canvassed the proposal that India's Governors General be divested of most of their powers. That was in 1825.¹¹ Apparently these Eurasians and Hindus did not include "No politics" in their Code of

Conduct as relevant for the years 1824-25 or believed that to be a juror was to remain their highest objective for the next hundred years.

That was the position up to the end of 1825. In 1826 Calcuttans took their second plunge. They had by then discovered the most vulnerable point in the armour of their foreign rulers. They resolved to concentrate their attack on that vulnerable point.

This second attempt to gain freedom arose out of the ashes of the first. Some of those responsible for the anti-foreign rule, anti-despotic rule propaganda of the early 1820s realised by the beginning of 1826 that the armed risings of 1824-25 had failed to make India free of foreign or despotic rule. They also realised that another spell of armed risings could not be expected to materialise in the near future. Considering all the pros and all the cons they might very reasonably have called a halt for the time being. But they did not. Instead, they decided to initiate a second attempt without any loss of time, but upon a different line of action. Their countrymen had failed to dislodge their foreign tyrants or to change the character of their government by brute force. They themselves next planned to bring their rulers to their knees by making it impossible for them to run the administration. They would defy its laws and orders ; they would starve it to submission ; - they would threaten to go out of the Empire. Judged by any standard, the programme was one too bold. And it might have proved unworkable. That it could be acted upon was *inter alia* because it came after the costly and bloody upheavals of 1824-25, and also because on the India question England was then a house divided against itself.

The Government had reason to feel jubilant as it got its very favourable treaty with Burma ; as it deported Durjan Sal out of Bharatpur and nothing untoward happened ; as its sepoy accepted service on terms more stringent than before. But it did not perhaps feel jubilant. For, by then,

the British Power in India had discovered its two heels of Achilles.

It appeared that what had been secured, was India's submission and not her affection, that she was being held down by the power of the sword only. And it was found that the government had no money to keep satisfied those who wielded the swords (and the pens.) This predicament was the direct result of the 1824-25 upheavals in India and the war with Burma. Our Calcutta group of politicians decided to take advantage of this grave difficulty of the government and to launch an attack on it on their own. For a group already suspect in the eyes of the authorities, it was a move with few equals in point of audacity. Succeeding chapters give the story of this attack and of its victory in the first round.

CHAPTER 11

BEFORE THE SECOND PLUNGE

The year 1826 saw the birth of a new movement. This time Calcutta was to be not merely an interested spectator, —instigating or encouraging or supporting others from outside. This time Calcutta was to be at the very centre of the struggle and Calcuttans themselves were to play in the key roles.

Before we proceed with our story, we shall, as is our wont, take a look at the set up and at as many of the sponsors of the movement as can be indentified.

In more sense than one it was an unpropitious time to launch a movement for political rights. Armed resistance had been tried and found wanting. Indian sepoy lay prostrate and could not be expected to make "one more effort" in the foreseeable future. After the fall of Bharatpur native princes and princelings had all lost heart. Even Ranjeet Singh appeared to have changed the direction of his moves.¹ India's millions, whom, in 1824-25, Malcolm, Heber and others had found excited with hopes and speculations and raising cries like "Company ka raj ho guia", — they no longer drew anybody's attention.

As for those living in the metropolis, they had neither swords nor guns. Their only weapon, the pen, was in shackles ; there was a law under which the Government could deprive anybody of his licence to run a paper without assigning any reason. They could not even talk freely. Their mouth was gagged ; there was a London directive under which the Local Government could ban any meeting without assigning any reason.² There was also a law under which the Government could deport any European without assigning any reason. And outside the limits of the Mahratta Ditch at least, the authorities could keep under detention any native for any length of time without

assigning any reason.³ No law was perhaps intrinsically bad or totally unnecessary. What made India little different from a land of slaves, was that the authorities could do so many things *without having to assign any reason*.

In another respect the time looked unpropitious for running a political movement. From 1823 the Government, first under John Adam, and next under Lord Amherst, had initiated a grand experiment of co-operation between the rulers and the ruled for remaking India, by quickening the pace, and widening the scope, of what we call the Bengal Renaissance. It was under this experiment that the Hindu College got Government grant and Radhakanta Debs got khetabs and khelats. At a time like this, it was difficult for Rammohun Roy and a few others, who did not get any chance of participating in this grand experiment, to induce Radhakanta Deb and many others, who got that privilege, to dissociate themselves from the Government and to join hands with the unfortunates. The General Committee of Public Instruction made a rapproachment between these two groups of Hindus more difficult by its marked denunciation of the second group, that of Rammohun and Rammohunites.

As the year 1826 neared its end, co-operation between the Native and the European inhabitants of India also got a shock. In October, Calcutta received particulars of Wynn's Indian Jury Act of 1826, and learnt that by its several provisions Christians (of European as well as Indian origin) had been given superior rights *vis-a-vis* Hindus and Mussulmans.⁴ It was very necessary for the general body of Indians to protest against this monstrous measure; and it could not be effectively argued against without asking for curtailment of the privileges conferred on Christians/Europeans and hurting their feelings. (If this aspect, that the measure would lead to strained relationship between India's various communities, had not occurred to our rulers of the time, they had definitely not politically matured

by then. If it had occurred to them, the Indian Jury Act of 1826 was a sure proof of their political maturity. For, this Act made it difficult for India to run any joint Indo-European agitation against the Government. The timing of the measure suggests the latter. President Wynn of the Board of Control took two steps at about the same time, — (a) he approved of a tax proposal which was likely to unite Indians and Europeans and help them run a joint campaign against the Government ; (b) he got this Jury Act passed which made any such joint move difficult.⁵

To complete the record, we should add here that India made conscious efforts to get round these and other handicaps. The Progressives amongst the Hindus, for example, moderated their zeal for socio-religious reforms. Rammohun Roy's Atmiya Sabha had earlier stipulated certain norms for all the 24 hours of the day and for all the 365 days of the year, *e.g.*, eschewing idolatry.⁶ Rammohun Roy's Brahmo Samaj stipulated norms for only a couple of hours per week, leaving a man free during the rest of his time to worship 'pouranic gods' in 'most shameful forms accompanied with the foulest language'.⁷ The Conservatives amongst the Hindus, on their part, softened towards the Progressives. We shall find, as we proceed, that many of the leading Hindus, who had earlier declined to serve on the Hindu College Committee if Rammohun Roy or any of his followers was connected with it,⁸ had no objection in 1827 to serving on the Committee then set up for political agitation, even though Rammohun and his followers formed an integral part of the same.⁹ Not irrelevant is also the fact that none amongst the orthodox Hindus is known to have voiced any disapproval when Rammohun founded his Brahmo Samaj in August 1828.¹⁰

More spectacular perhaps was the reaction of the Christian / European community to the divisive provisions of Wynn's Jury Act. We all know that Hindus and Mussulmans

protested against those provisions which conferred special privileges on Christians/Europeans. We need know and record in gold that Christians/Europeans themselves protested against those measures.¹¹ Incidentally, we all know that in the next decade native Dwarkanath Tagore obtained signatures to the representation that Europeans should not be deprived of some of their special privileges. And we feel surprised, mortified. Dwarkanath and his followers knew that they were but repaying a debt of honour incurred in 1827-28. Incidentally again, the Macaulay measure of the late 1830s was based on the reasoning that Europeans in India should be *deprived* of certain special privileges to make Indians and Europeans equal before the law. Dwarkanath's and his associates' opposition was based on the reasoning that those privileges should be *conferred* on Indians to make Indians and Europeans equal before the law, and the immediate need of the time was then to put an end to the attempt to deprive Europeans of those privileges. This aspect needs further clarification, and will be dealt with in the second volume of our submission.¹²

As regards the media being Government controlled, the restrictions imposed, could affect printed matter only. And so far as the general body of Indians were concerned, printed literature played but a negligible part. For them the media consisted of *native akhbars* which, Lord Amherst (or his spokesman) found, spread false rumours; *native reports* which, Metcalfe found, "spread like wild fire", and which sometimes the *Calcutta Monthly Journal* deemed "proper to keep back"; *circular letters, proclamations* "dispersed over the country with celerity that is incredible" "by numerous though unseen hands", as Malcolm put it; "innumerable private letters" which, Mugmoodvre found, conveyed intelligence ... to every part of the country." Some, perhaps most, of those were hand-written things, generally copied and circulated in a manner which was India's own, and which, according to the *Calcutta Monthly*

Journal, "perhaps has not been equalled by the ingenuity of any European."

According to contemporary evidences,¹³ those having any message to circulate, sent, in the name of some god or goddess, say 10 hand-written copies of the message in question, to 10 persons, with appeals to each recipient to forward on his part, 10 copies of the same to 10 persons with similar appeal, threatening dire calamity to anybody disregarding the appeal and breaking the chain. This meant that any message, at its, say 8th stage, could theoretically have reached ($10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10$) ten crores of people. Very rarely, perhaps never, it succeeded to that extent. But the people being uncommonly superstitious, it went a long way. (There is no categorical admission to the effect that India ever made political use of this media; there are plenty of evidences as cited above, to show that India had repeatedly made political use of hand-written communications.)

The authorities also had their share of difficulties and disappointments. And some of the Indians had knowledge of the same and perhaps drew encouragement therefrom.

Firstly, Lord Amherst's grand experiment, located in Calcutta, made no impact at the time on any part of Bengal outside the Mahratta Ditch. It is not without a message that none in Mofussil Bengal ever lamented when, in 1822-23, the Hindu College looked like dying, nor rejoiced when, in 1824-26, it got revitalised. Radhakanta Debs might have felt happy and reconciled to the Government at the change that was coming over India, but not India's millions living in their villages. For them, if there had been any change, it had been for the worse. Till 1823 they knew that the Government had placed them at the mercy of the minions of absentee landlords, a class never famed for their mercy. They also knew all the time that the said Government, by introducing machine-made piecegoods, had deprived hundreds of thousands of them of their principal

means of livelihood. From 1824 they learnt further that they would have to pay additional taxes to keep that Government on the saddle.¹⁴

Secondly, at least one particular part of India, the Upper Provinces, from which "most of our soldiers come" and hence "where enemies are most to be dreaded", had not forgotten the sufferings and the humiliations of the Barrack-pur treatment. We get from an on-the-spot assessment made at the time by C. E. Trevelyan, that around 1826-28 "the only form which native patriotism assumed up the country, was plotting against us and meditating combinations against us." Trevelyan called it the 'native model' of winning freedom; and added: "Supposing our connexion with India to cease according to" that model, "it will cease suddenly,—it will cease by a violent convulsion."¹⁵ What Trevelyan, a foreigner, sensed, was likely to have been noticed by the natives also.

Thirdly, there appeared to have been growing something like a rupture between the executive and the judicial branches of the Government. The Bombay Supreme Court, for example, refused to 'register' and sanction a Bengal type Press Regulation for the Bombay area.¹⁶ In Bengal, it was believed, rightly or wrongly, that the Calcutta Supreme Court might not approve of the proposed tax measures.¹⁷ Even the Company's Court, the Sudder Dewanny and Nizamut Adawlut, it was found, had amongst its judges men like Courtenay Smith, who caused enough annoyance to the Government.¹⁸ Not unnaturally, these signs and portents angered and disappointed the rulers, while pleasing and encouraging the ruled.

Fourthly, for some time past, the Government had been suffering from the ailment of unbalanced budgets. In those days currency manipulation and other fiscal measures had very limited scope of application. The Government then had to have money chiefly in metallic coins. And the Government of Amherst did not have metal in sufficient

quantity. How difficult the situation was, would be clear from the study of a development, which occurring in 1825-26 made the Government a laughing stock. *The Columbian Press Gazette* of Monte D'Rozario thus reported the development (and for having done so, was deprived of its licence) :

"It was found necessary to send money to pay the troops at Rangoon ; and as Company's paper is not very current in the Golden Empire, rupees had to be procured for that purpose ; but the treasury, as all the world knows, was exhausted. ... The shroffs (Native Bankers) ... were informed that they would get a batta or per centage on all the silver that they should pay into the treasury ; and by a natural consequence all the silver in the bazar was transferred to the great house and the expedient seemed to answer beyond the most sanguine expectation of the projectors. But the shroffs were not satisfied with such small gains. They immediately converted their bank notes into rupees, thereby drawing bullion out of the bank, which they immediately carried to the treasury and received the per centage. But the run on the bank obliged (them) to suspend cash payments till they could get reinforcements from the treasury which was again paid out for Bank notes and again carried into the treasury for the sake of the per centage, so that in the end the per centage was paid half a dozen times over upon the same identical rupees. The Bank was drained of its bullion and the state of the treasury very little improved."¹⁹

The war ended in 1826. But the economic situation did not improve. In a country 'held primarily by the sword', even in peace time an army of nearly 300,000 had to be maintained. The national debt had reached a new high because of the Burma War and other upheavals of 1824-25, and it then stood at £40,000,000, calling for an outlay of about £2,000,000 a year for servicing it. So, war or no war, Government expenses exceeded its income. It was even reported that the sepoys

"had been sometimes in arrears for eight, twelve, even eighteen months, having nothing but a bare subsistence."²⁰

In 1825 Indians had learnt from *John Bull*, as also from other sources, that

"The Bank of Bengal suspended payment a second time, in consequence, it would appear, of its great exertions to relieve the necessities of the Government."²¹

And they themselves had noticed that loans floated by the Government had proved failures.²²

Fifthly, in 1825, an astute observer of the time, Bishop Heber, stood convinced that to "make the empire as durable as it would be happy" it was "necessary to draw less money from the peasants and to spend more of what is drawn within the country."²³ Against the background of this assessment is to be judged the Amherst Government's programme of drawing not less but more money from the peasants and its inability to spend anything out of what is drawn within the country, at least so far as the peasants were concerned. Had Heber lived beyond 1825, he would have again lamented: "I have not been led to believe that our government is generally popular or advancing towards popularity."

Could the East India Company in England or the Paramount authority there have come to the rescue of their Indian administration in this respect? Indians reading London papers and having correspondents in London could hardly think so. For, in mid-1826, they got (not these words, but the sense thereof) that in England

"The [financial] disaster reached its climax in the course of the same week [in December, 1825]: three London Banks and sixtythree in the provinces suspended payment."

"There were strikes and riots at Whitehaven, Norwich, Bradford, Drawbridge, Carlisle, Dudley and above all in Lancashire where the weavers broke the machines recently introduced to the value of £30,000."

At one time London feared that "the summer [of 1826] may resemble that of 1819 [upheavals among the labouring classes], and then for the 'six Acts' again."²⁴

That the East India Company's London coffer could not have provided any relief to its Indian administration is indicated by the fact that not much later India was called upon to send bullion to England herself, and eventually she did send there £1,000,000 in bullion to keep the East India Company on its legs.

Knowledgeable Indians also got from London papers circulating in India and from private letters from their overseas friends, that trouble had been brewing in other parts of the British Empire,—in Australia, in Canada, in Cape Colony, in Van Diem's Island.²⁵ Everywhere cries were being raised for political rights. Of these developments, that occurring in Canada is of special significance to our study. Every educated Indian has heard of Rammohun Roy's reference to Canada living happy and contented under the British aegis. What every educated Indian should know besides, is that Rammohun had talked of Canada living happy in subjection to England in the year 1823;²⁶ thereafter he got a different lesson in Canadian history. He got, for example :

Under Papineau, a Deist, Canadians demanded "complete control of all the revenue whatever its source. ... In 1827 when the Assembly refused to vote a limited budget, Lord Dalhousie dissolved it, and when the new Assembly met, he ... [attempted] to veto the choice of Papineau as Speaker. Next year the British Government ... [offered] the placing of the [entire] revenue at the disposal of the Assembly in return for a permanent civil list ... but the Assembly rejected this limited concession ..."²⁷

By then the myth of the Canadian contentment stood exploded; and, as we shall see later, Rammohun Roys were fully aware of this position; in fact they themselves circulated in their papers in India the stories of British oppression of the Canadians; and another, perhaps an Englishman, belonging to the agitation, circulated in Buckingham's paper in London :

"Why, why would you alienate our affection? Have you no other sources of anxiety that you would create one here which may become the sorest and the most serious of all? Are the Canadians contented? Has no Australian whisper of dissatisfaction fled across the Pacific wave?"²⁸

To Indians of the time, however, not Canada nor Australia nor Cape Colony, but Ireland, standing at almost the centre of the British Empire, was the principal point of attraction. We all know that Indians like Rammohun Roy

felt much distressed at the sufferings of the Irish people.²⁰ We need also know that they sometimes got much encouraged by what had been happening there. To bring the position into clearer focus, we are here taking into consideration all the relevant Irish developments of the years 1826-28 in one sweep.

Since 1801 Ireland had no Parliament of her own. Irish people were then given representation on the British Parliament itself (100 in the House of Commons, 28 in the House of Lords,) but with a proviso that while Irish Roman Catholics could vote for selection of Members for the Parliament they themselves could not stand for election as Members.

Ireland under O'Connell had been whipping up opposition to this state of things for some time past. In 1827-28 he felt emboldened enough to stand for election to the London Parliament, which,—as he was a Roman Catholic,—he could not do as per the law. His people knew he had no legal status: none-the-less they solidly voted for him. He got 'returned'. He was not accepted by the British Parliament of George IV, his coronation oath standing in the way.

"The effect of this manœuvre [of O'Connell] was [however] to render the Government not of Ireland only but of the entire United Kingdom impossible. Henceforward [Prime Minister] Wellington could not appoint to an office in the cabinet or raise to the peerage any representative of an Irish constituency without risking its repetition. ... After June [1828] a settlement of the [Irish] Catholic question could no longer be avoided."²⁰

Knowledgeable Indians had heard earlier how strongly opposed to the idea of Catholic Emancipation were Prime Minister Wellington and King George IV. When they learnt that Wellington had turned a *volte face* and had himself forced George IV to forget his coronation oath and to agree to "reform the laws which impose civil disabilities on His Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects", they must have got exhilarated with joy abounding. To them it meant not only

the gaining of civil rights by the Irish people; to them it came as a proof that the ruling British power however strongly entrenched, could be made to unsettle 'settled' facts, if the subject people concerned acted with intelligence and with determination. "Out of the thirty thousand soldiers which compose the forces stationed in the United Kingdom, the Government is obliged to employ twenty-five thousand to police Ireland. What will happen on the day near or distant, when England is once more at war with a foreign power?"—Robert Peel put to his King in January 1829. Rammohun Roy had put to England just five months earlier :

"It should not be lost sight of that the position of India is very different from that of Ireland to any quarter of which an English fleet may suddenly convey a body of troops that may force its way in the requisite direction and succeed in suppressing every effort of a refractory spirit."³¹

England knew, and Rammohun Roys knew that England knew, that out of about 300,000 soldiers stationed here to keep India British, about 280,000 were Indians, and a mutiny staged by some of them was just then being debated upon in the British Parliament.

They must, no doubt, have realised at the same time that O'Connells had won because England was then (1826-28) divided against herself on the Irish question. This however did not worry them very much. For, they knew that England was divided against herself on the Indian question also. Had not several powerful blocks been just at that time clamouring for dispossessing the East India Company of its special privileges? Had not some of them even espoused the cause of the sepoys fallen at Barrackpur while defying the British authority in India?

They knew that their supporters were in a minority. But by 1826 they knew also that the position was changing for the better. For several years past Buckingham and Arnot, then settled in London, had been running what was virtually a London Front of the Indian agitation for poli-

tical and other rights at the expense of the East India Company. They had a paper of their own called the *Oriental Herald*; it played a great part. They also ventilated their views at meetings of the East India Company's Court of Proprietors. The Calcutta agitators must have felt encouraged by the news that England had changed to the extent of publicly compensating Buckingham and Arnot for the losses suffered by them at the hands of the East India Company's executives.³²

Buckinghams were rendering another great service to the Indian cause. They helped build up the image of Rammohun Roys as interested in Christianising India, in extending the practice of Free Trade to India, and in the programme of European settlement there. This programme, motivated or not, had a great success. Not all England, but a good many there became interested in, and sympathetic to, this group and its aspirations. We get a measure of the extent and depth of this interest and sympathy when we recall to mind that not long after one of the most honoured English political theoreticians of the time, Jeremy Bentham, addressed one of the leaders of the aforesaid group,—Rammohun Roy, as :

"Intensely admired and dearly beloved collaborator in the service of mankind."³³

It helped. John Adams and Amhersts could not, at least openly, try to rough handle those whom Bentham's so admired.

And the change that 'the great George Canning' underwent about this time,—that also must have filled India with joy and hopes. Knowledgeable Indians knew that when Canning had

"entered the Foreign Office [in 1822] the Constitutionalists were in power at Lisbon. ... [He had then adopted towards them the attitude of an orthodox Tory; had prevented them from making common cause with the Liberals of Cadiz and had supported the coup d'état by which in the spring of 1823 King John [of Portugal] abolished the Constitution of 1822."³⁴

Canning was then understood to disfavour freedom fights raging at the time in different parts of the world; for "it was a question of supporting the revolution against the monarchical principle,—that he was not prepared to do." By 1825 the world heard that Canning had offered the King the choice of accepting [his] resignation or consenting to recognise the South American republics", and that the King had yielded.⁸⁵ Soon after they heard that Great Britain had recognised the free republics of Buenos Aires, Mexico and Columbia. And by 1826, in Europe itself, the Portuguese Constitutional Party was supported by England, chiefly through the instrumentality of Canning, who declared :

"We go to plant the standard of England on the well known heights of Lisbon. Where that standard is planted, foreign dominion shall not come."⁸⁶

This change in Canning must have appeared to Indians as a welcome sign if they had knowledge of it. And they did have knowledge of it. When Canning, facing opposition to his policy, threatened to resign, and the news of 'Canning in difficulty' reached India some time in the second half of 1827, Indians strongly reacted to it. We find Rammohun Roy writing to his English friends :

"I think it is incumbent upon every man who detests despotism and abhors biogotry, to defend the character of our illustrious minister Mr. Canning and support his administration if possible. I will therefore embrace another opportunity of performing what I consider my duty."⁸⁷

That was the stage. In India,—Amherst's Bengal Renaissance through co-operation between the ruled and the rulers remained confined within the limits of the Mahratta Ditches; India's millions living in the villages continued to suffer as they had been suffering for a long time past; those in the Upper Provinces still remembered the Barrackpur brutalities of 1824; the Bank of Bengal had suspended payment at least twice, and the loans floated by the Government had not found takers as quickly

as before ; the Government, hounded by the spectre of unbalanced budgets, had turned to the dangerous course of taxing a people already in hardship, and had made more restive those who paid rent, borrowed money, served as contract labourers, bought or sold land,—in short, almost everybody ; the Judiciary was refusing the Executives the laws they wanted. In England,—the country in general and the East India Company in particular, was in the grip of more or less acute financial distress ; in the political fields, all the British dependencies were clamouring for effective control of their destiny ; Ireland, under O'Connell, was preparing for a struggle which eventually forced the British King to forget his coronation oath ; George Canning had turned into a supporter of freedom fights ; the anti-EIC groups had gained ground to the extent of making England publicly compensate Buckingham's and Arnot's losses suffered at the hands of the Company. It was on this stage that the next round was to be won or lost.

Before however we deal with the second round or the second plunge itself, we feel we should take notice of another development which shows the link between the indoctrination programme of the early 1820s and the second plunge of the latter part of the decade.

With the indoctrination programme of 1820-23 James Silk Buckingham, Sandford Arnot, James Sutherland,—*Europeans* ; and Monte D' Rozario, Peter Stone D' Rozario, J. F. Sandys,—*Eurasians*, were connected through Buckingham's paper, the *Calcutta Journal* ; and Rammohun Roy, Dwarkanath Tagore, Prosunnacoomar Tagore, etc.,—*Hindus*, through Rammohun's paper, the *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*.²⁸

In March 1823 Buckingham left India under government orders ; in December 1823 Arnot was arrested and sent out of India. The *Mirat* ceased publication in April the same year, and the *Calcutta Journal* went the same way towards the end of the year. All the time Rammohun Roy, actively helped by James Sutherland and his several Hindu

associates, had been trying to get the hated Press Regulation rejected (by the Supreme Court in Calcutta) or repealed (by the King in Council in London.)³⁹

In 1824 James Sutherland as editor and Monte D' Rozario as licensee-proprietor, brought out a successor paper to the *Calcutta Journal* and called it the *Columbian Press Gazette*.⁴⁰ⁱ Rammohun Roy faced ruin and his son the gallows,—according to Sutherland, because of the displeasure of the Court of Directors.⁴⁰ⁱⁱ In those dark days of 1824-26 Sutherland rendered great service to Rammohun even at the risk of becoming a persona-non-grata to a large section of his own people.⁴¹

In January 1826 the *Columbian Press Gazette* lost its licence and ceased publication. In about six months' time Monte D'Rozario obtained another licence, started his second paper, the *Bengal Chronicle*, and put it under the editorial charge of Sutherland. We get the group affiliation of this paper, also from the fact that it started its career with a discussion of the fate of Rammohun's petition to London for repealing the 1823 Press Regulation. It was a banned subject. The *Calcutta Journal* had lost its licence for discussing Stanhope's article about the Regulation.⁴² No other paper ever dared raise its voice in support of Rammohun's plea. If the *Bengal Chronicle* did so even at the risk of calling upon itself the wrath of the Government, it could only be that its owner accepted the Rammohun stand as his own and as of greater importance than the life of his paper. The Government issued a stern warning ; the paper promised to be careful in future. That was in August, 1826.⁴³ Within less than six months it forgot its promise. It discussed another banned subject, the Burma War. On this occasion it took the line as given in the Rammohun (Mugmoodvre) letter referred to earlier.⁴⁴ That also gives an idea of its group affiliation. And for this indiscretion the paper received notice of cancellation of its licence. That was in December 1826.⁴⁵

Monte D'Rozario had to sacrifice Sutherland to save his paper. But in doing so, he brought the paper nearer to the Rammohun line. For, the successor editor was Rammohun Roy's Unitarian convert William Adam. In the meantime the well-established veteran paper, the *Bengal Hurkaru*, also was moving towards this group. In 1825 another Unitarian associate of Rammohun Roy, Barrister Theodore Dickens, had taken editorial charge of this paper. About this time he relinquished his charge, and Rammohun's closer associate Sutherland succeeded him.⁴⁶

A third development occurred soon after. Viliers Holcroft, a Eurasian nonentity, (about whom only this much has come to our knowledge that he was a supporter of Rammohun's welfare projects,)⁴⁷ obtained licence for another weekly paper, called it the *Calcutta Chronicle*, and put it under the editorial care of William Adam, who had by then quarrelled with and separated himself from D' Rozario. (These quarrels were not taken as genuine by their enemies.)⁴⁸ That was in January 1827.

The two *Chronicles* and the *Bengal Hurkaru* in Calcutta and Buckingham's *Oriental Herald* in London worked as a joint team. What was possible to publish in India in spite of the Press Regulation, was straightway circulated in the Indian papers. If the Government took action against any paper, that was given wide publicity in London in the pages of the *Oriental Herald*. What could not be published in India at all, was sent to London in manuscript, published there as pamphlets or as "letters to the editor" in the *Oriental Herald*. And as there was no law regulating the import of printed materials here, India could get as much of objectionable articles as she cared for. Not infrequently the papers commented upon one another's submissions, which ensured wider publicity. Here is a case illustrating how the system worked.⁴⁹

As told in a preceding section, Justice Smith saved Rammohun Roy's son from dying on the gallows or spending

the rest of his life in prison, and soon after he himself was suspended (and subsequently dismissed) from service "by the Government for his venturing to offer an opinion as to a matter judicially brought before him which was not agreeable to the Government", about a security tendered in respect of a suit pending before the Privy Council, and about the possibility that the Company's charter might not be renewed on its old terms. The papers belonging to the aforesaid group (and those alone) decided to give publicity to the incident and to rouse public opinion against such arbitrary measures.

The *Calcutta Chronicle* published a 'letter to the editor' giving "a simple statement of facts of the case" and adding :

"Our correspondent, in a part of his letter, which we have taken the liberty to withdraw, solicited our opinion upon this case ... We hope soon to take up the question ... relating to the independence of the Judges."

The *Bengal Chronicle* re-published this 'letter to the editor' and put in besides :

It has been said that "this opinion has subjected Mr. Courtenay Smith to the severe displeasure of the Government. A more disrespectful insinuation than this against the Government we never recollect to have seen, and we think that ... the Editor ... deserves the heaviest punishment. The complete independence of judges except for misconduct and corruption is so absolutely necessary to secure anything like decent government that it is in the eyes of the whole public a most intolerable imputation to assert that the displeasure of the Government could be awakened by anything but judicial corruption or misconduct, and from anything of this sort it is pretty well known that no individual can be more free than the one in question."

The *Bengal Hurkaru* followed suit.

Thereafter, the *Oriental Herald* in London re-published all that had appeared in the *Bengal Chronicle* and the *Bengal Hurkaru*, and added :

The observation of the *Hurkaru* is "so keen in its irony and yet so powerful in its plainness, that we can imagine the Indian [Government]

Secretaries and Counsellors biting their lips with shame and rage at reading it and bursting with mortification at their being unable to lay hold of it as a substantive ground of censure or complaint."

As we proceed, we shall find, these four papers,—three in Calcutta and one in London,—acted as the mouthpiece of the political agitation of the years 1827-28.

THE SECOND PLUNGE

In 1820-25 the end was securing territorial sovereignty as well as political freedom. And the means was armed risings, chiefly by the sepoys. The attempt had failed. In 1826-30 the end was securing political rights amounting to self government within the British Empire. And the means was negotiation from a position of strength. The earlier plan had been to drive out the East India Company rulers at the point of the sword. The revised plan, what we have called 'the second plunge', was to starve them into submission. And to make the plan a success, the planners took their cue from the East India Company itself. "Divide and rule", said the policy makers of that Company. "Divide and down them"—appears to have been the policy of some of the Indians of the 1820s.

The attack on the East India Company was to be a two-pronged one. In England, attempts were to be made to win the sympathy, and eventually the vote, of the anti-East India Company interests and the uncommitted groups there. The British people in general would be offered, over the head of the East India Company, (a) acceptance of their Free Trade policy ; (b) support to their Colonisation proposals ; (c) interest in their programme of winning India for Christ. In exchange they would be asked to give Indians the right and opportunity of running their country. (This game appears to have started, in an embryonic form, as early as 1823.)¹ That was the programme for England. In India, attempts were to be made to starve the Company's Government into submission,—and to do so with a bang. Supplies would be withheld, not by artfully evading tax payments, but by openly refusing to pay tax unless and until certain conditions were fulfilled. And those conditions were to be such, that fulfilling them would amount to giving the people

the right to govern themselves. In short, the East India Company was to be abused, defied, denied the money to run the administration; the British people in general were to hear prayers for the British rule "to continue in its beneficent operation for centuries to come."

That was the master plan. We shall now see how this master plan was introduced and acted upon.

Anybody, reporting uninhibited from Calcutta of the first quarter of 1827, would have written about an unusual development then taking shape there,—of a tussle between a 'prayer' and a 'demand'.

In January 1827 a prayer arose in Calcutta. A very natural prayer. Some time before, a new tax edict, called the Stamp Duties Regulation, had been announced for the Calcutta people. A new tax is always disliked. And oftener than not requests are made either to withdraw the tax altogether or to lessen its burden. In respect of this tax, Calcutta decided to submit a petition to the authorities. And by February 1827 a petition was got ready for signature.

At about the same time an extremely unnatural development was taking shape in Calcutta,—a demand for repeal of the said Stamp Regulation. The starting point was the same; but thereafter the two hardly, if ever, met again.

For example, the prayer began with a 'disclaim.' They said, "they disclaim any wish or intention to question the power or authority of Government" to act as they considered proper. The demand said:

"The independent inhabitants ... that is every European out of service and all the Natives who enjoy the protection of the Supreme Court ... stand out on the principle that this trading Government of a leasehold company ... shall not be at liberty to tax [them] ... without their consent."

A prayer never challenges the right or power of the authority prayed to. A demand sometimes does. The difference between the two approaches is obvious. And the second group went on emphasising that difference. They declared:

"It is ... to the principle rather than the mere operation of this new tax -- that we would direct public attention."³

And what was the principle? It was not that the tax should be just or equitable, nor that it should not be too heavy.

The deciding point or principle, according to them, was that

"The power to originate taxation resides exclusively with the representatives of the people." (The tax in question was objected to, because this basic principle had been violated.)⁴

While they did not leave out that "The taxation is ill-suited to the people, to the times, to the needs," they said; "Our objection is chiefly on other grounds ... [that it is] illegal and unconstitutional," because it has been levied without our consent.⁵

And they soon up-graded their demand, and went on up-grading it. In their very first public reference to the said Stamp Regulation, they had linked the question of paying or not paying a tax with that of having or not having "a voice in the Government of the country."⁶ As time passed, they put more and more emphasis on that link. They talked of "control over outlay of the taxes".⁷ They questioned the authority of the Supreme Council in India on the ground of its not "being accountable to the people for the expenditure".⁸ They said:

"We have no share in its Councils, and ought not to be in any wise responsible or sufferers by its failures."⁹

They even brought in the superior authorities functioning in London for sharing their criticism. We read:

"It is grievous to see that ... India have to pay for three Governments, —the local, the directorial [the Court of Directors,] and the controlling [the Board of Control,]—none of them subject to any check on expenditure by the unfortunate tax payers."¹⁰

They demanded 'elected executives' apparently on the North American lines. Their words:

"We have no voice in the nomination of those set over us. From one end of India to the other, no subject of England, —European or Indian, —has anything to say in the choice of one single functionary."¹¹

Coming to the matter of framing laws, they said:

"If we have nothing to do with the laws but [only] to obey them,

those who would reduce us to a point in the scale so nearly approaching the servile state, must be content to reap as they sow."¹²

Another thing never has a place in prayer,—threats. In the case under study we find Indians telling English visitors :

The U. S. A. "were formerly a colony of England, but ... on being taxed excessively, they had taken upon them the governing of themselves ... as we shall one day do."¹³

A Calcutta paper said in print :

There is a proposal of "introduction into the British dominions in India of that very principle of Government which lost Great Britain her American colonies, viz., Taxation without Representation."¹⁴

Englishmen, living in India, reported to their people at home :

"England did a foolish and daring thing in attempting to force the Stamp Act upon the Anglo-Americans. All men have heard of the result. But our countrymen seem already to have forgotten the lesson. ... Let it not be said hereafter, if discontent shall forge weapon for despair, that England had no warning."¹⁵

An Englishman with Indian experience said in England :

"We lost America by the same line of conduct, attempting to tax the people without giving them a voice in the matter. ... If persisted in, this may lead to the entire loss of that country [India]."¹⁶

The platform chosen was the best possible. For one thing, it needed no salesman ; it sold itself. For another, if successful, it might have forced the hands of the government as it eventually did. In India of the 1820s there was perhaps not even one in a million who understood what representative or constitutional form of government was ; but almost every adult Indian understood the implication of 'no tax without his consent'. The issue was not an abstract one, nor the expected gain a distant possibility. The government was just then demanding some money from him ; and he was being exhorted by some people not to pay it because his prior consent had not been taken. He knew for certain what he would get if the move succeeded. He would not have to pay what the government was demanding. It was as simple as that. And the political movement would get an important right automatically conceded ; and that

right, in the last analysis, meant control over the government. For, as it happened in England, the tax asked for could be levied for a limited period, say one year ; and that would have made the executive authority solicit the people's co-operation at the end of each and every year. It was not necessary for the millions to know and understand all this. They had only to love their mite and to be reluctant to part with it.

Every Indian, as he reads this chapter, would remember India's efforts a century later to gain political rights through non-cooperation including violation of laws and no-tax campaigns. He would also perhaps notice a vital difference. In the latter day no-tax campaigns the people were asked not to pay a particular tax because the same was heavy or unjust, for example, the salt tax. It had no direct political implication. If the move succeeded, a particular tax would have been withdrawn,—land in this or that draught stricken area would have become rent-free, salt would have sold cheaper. National leaders would have claimed that the agitation had forced the hands of the government. Government spokesmen would have talked of having acted out of compassion for the people. Political freedom, meaning the end of despotism, would have remained as far off as before. Not so in the 1820s. As seen above, if the move succeeded, if the right to raise revenue was conceded to the people, all political rights would have inevitably gravitated to the people.

We started this chapter with the claim that some people in India of the mid 1820s were interested in running an agitation for securing political rights. Is there proof enough to connect these developments with any particular group of identifiable persons ? The position is as follows.

Firstly, the most natural choice is our Calcutta group of politicians. There were at the time many a group in different parts of the country, which were critical of 'England's work in India'. But so far only one group had

been found which, in the 1820s or at any time earlier, had ever talked of the rights of the ruled *vis-a-vis* their rulers, or of the importance of separating the legislative from the executive authority. That group is the one under our study. They said so in their periodicals, in their pamphlets, in their various representations to Government.¹⁷

We get the same answer if we look at the precedents and take a count of those in India who at the time were aware of, and interested in, those precedents. It was about a leader of this particular group, namely Rammohun Roy, that Lt. Col. Fitzclarence, the Earl of Munster, wrote in 1818 :

"It is remarkable that he has studied and thoroughly understands the politics of Europe, but particularly those of England ; and the last time I was in his company, he argued forcibly against a standing army in a free country."¹⁸

Students of history need not perhaps be reminded of the part this question of having or not having a standing army played in the development of political institutions in England.

We get the same answer from Archdeacon Corrie's observations made in 1830-31. While talking about people "clamouring for political privileges" for "some time" past, he identified by name two groups of people and one individual. The two groups were "the Anglo-Indians" and the "enlightened Hindus". The individual identified was Rammohun Roy.¹⁹ A break-up of the group running the 1820-23 political programme gives us these very components.²⁰

So far we have been able to trace the 'demand' type reaction directly to only three of the Calcuttans,—William Adam and James Sutherland, editors of the *Bengal Chronicle*, the *Calcutta Chronicle* and the *Bengal Hurkaru*; and Theodore Dickens, ex-editor, *Bengal Hurkaru*, and at the time one of the chief contributors to the papers named above. All the three were members of the Rammohun group's Calcutta Unitarian Committee. The first named

was besides a stipendiary of this Committee ; and he, as well as the second named, were for a long time past *personae-non-grata* to almost the entire European community for their association with and acceptance of Rammohun Roy.³¹ What is more revealing is not however their association with the Rammohunites, but their dissociation from all other groups.

Considering that the most natural choice is the group under our study, and also that the persons actually writing and publicising the said political demands belonged to the same group, and that the men most involved in the writing and publicising were, on the one hand, friends of the same group and, on the other, *personae-non-grata* to the general body of the people, it is reasonable to claim that the 'radical faction' as branded by the *John Bull*,³² which changed the order of priorities and transformed an economic question into a political one, was the group under our study. And the time table presented in Chapter 14 clinches the issue.

A postscript

To keep our records straight, we should mention here that sometimes superior rights were claimed for Englishmen on the ground that they had come from the ruling country.³³ We had initially thought that this superior claim of "the British-borns" was sometimes raised because the writers were all of that species. On second reading we had to give up that explanation. The references to the political rights of the British-borns were not casual ; but deliberate, persistent. At least on one crucial occasion³⁴ all the three pro-agitation papers,—the two *Chronicles* and the *Bengal Hurkaru*,—wrote in a chorus thousands of words about the political rights of one section of the agitators only, *viz.*, the British-born residents of India. Since the petitions were all signed by hundreds of non-British borns also, some other explanation has to be found..

A more convincing explanation seems to be the realisation by the agitators that the native half of them,—‘the conquered people’, the people who had lived under unbroken and absolute despotic rule for the preceding hundreds of years, had really no case at all. How could a people with such a record claim the right of free meeting, free speaking, or raise the cry of ‘No taxation without representation’, on the ground that they had in the past enjoyed those privileges? If the agitators were to build up a case on that ground, they could speak only as British-born residents of India. And they spoke so.

In this study we are generally considering the two halves jointly. If, for a change, we look at the European half and the Indian half separated from each other, we find that the latter was the weaker, and, generally, the braver side. Adam, for example, knew that the worst Amherst could do to him would be to send him home ‘freight paid’. The natives who funded the maintenance of Adam as he hurled abuses on Amherst and his government, could not be sure that they would not have the Barrackpur treatment, or at least live in dungeon for the rest of their life. There would be no court trial; for, as Mr. Wynn told the House of Commons:

“From the nature of the wars in which they had been engaged and from the constitution of society in India, he feared that the [arbitrary] confinement of prisoners could not be avoided.”²⁵

And nobody would know anything, for, as the India Government believed: “The liberty of the press ... is not consistent with the ... extraordinary nature of our dominions in India.”²⁶

Yet we find that the natives acted with greater audacity. Eurasian J. F. Sandys ran the *Calcutta Journal*; Eurasians Monte D’Rozario and Viliers Holcroft were the licensee-proprietors of the *Columbian Press Gazette*, the *Bengal Chronicle*, the *Calcutta Chronicle*. When Buckingham was deported and the Indian Press was gagged, the British-born

residents of India, who hailing from Free England were expected to feel more strongly, maintained unbroken silence, not for months but years ; those who openly challenged the Government over this matter were 'half-a-dozen natives [Hindus].'²⁷ Again, on the deportation of Sandford Arnot, the natives alone made an attempt to get the relative order rescinded. More particularly, in 1827 itself, the native agitators, who had no past rights to stand upon, and no present rights to fight with, overwhelmingly (3 : 1) outnumbered their better equipped European counterparts when the agitation took the decisive step of convening a public meeting to examine the extent of the powers and privileges of the Governor General, the Court of Directors, the Board of Control.²⁸

CHAPTER 18

WORDS, DEEDS

Words we have in plenty,—brave words. We have already seen them. We now propose to move one step further, and examine whether or not any of those brave words was ever translated into action.

Indoctrination

This very essential part of the programme had a run of about eight years when the agitation got into its full swing in 1827-28. We have already taken notice of developments up to 1823. Seminars were held, as also public meetings and celebrations; periodicals were brought out in several languages; leaflets and books also. In later years they organised Young People's Associations which carried on political propaganda under cover of literary discussions. We get from a letter of Archdeacon (later Bishop) Daniel Corrie:

In their debating societies 'politics and religion are excluded from the subject of discussion, ... [yet] when discoveries in science or government happen to come up, France is eulogised unboundedly, and America; but England, if referred to, always deprecated. Thus our rulers are preparing a scourge for their own backs.'¹

How far the young people got impregnated with the spirit of their elders, would be clear from the following episode.

"Miss B visited the [Hindu] College last week and examined one of the classes in history. She asked about America; ... [they told her] that they were formerly a colony of England but that on being taxed excessively they had taken upon them the governing of themselves," and added quite unnecessarily and provocatively: "*as we shall one day do.*"²

It was not perhaps an accident that a Eurasian boy of 17/18 years became the idol of Young Bengal of 1826-27. He was Henry Louis Vivian Derozio. In later years Derozio

earned everlasting fame as a rationalist, as a denouncer of the ignominies found in Hindu beliefs, Hindu practices. Not so in 1826-27. In those days he captured the imagination of his listeners, reminding them of India's greatness in her Hindu past, and in the same breath telling them that her

"eagle pinion is chained down at last ;

And grovelling in the lowly dust art thou."

His most challenging poem, *The Golden Vase*, has :

"Oh, when our country writhes in galling chains,

When her proud masters scourge her as a dog,—

If her wild cry be borne upon the gale,

Our bosoms at the melancholy sound

Should swell, and we should rush to her relief,

Like sons at an unhappy parent's wail."

If the question was : "till when should we fight", the answer would be :

"We should not pause,

Till every tyrant who on us hath trod,

Lies humbled at our feet, or, till we find

Graves which may truly say this much for us :

Here sleep the brave who loved their country well."³

It is a pity that till now we have always read these poems in a vacuum. To get the true import of these patriotic outbursts, we have to keep in mind that Derozio penned and circulated them in 1827 when Calcutta stood poised for a struggle for substantial political rights, if not for total freedom. In January, the *Bengal Chronicle* talked of no taxation "without a voice in the government." In May, the same paper was found challenging the power of the sovereign of Great Britain to gag his subjects to silence. In July, in August, in October the same paper was highlighting the atrocities committed by the British all over the world, and adding that a solution would be found only "When they rise up in judgement ... cry aloud with one voice as it were for enquiry and redress,—Canada, Sydney, Van Diem's Island, the West Indies, the Cape and [Ireland

and India]." Side by side, the same organization,—Samuel Smith & Co., which was then publishing the *Bengal Chronicle*,—was also circulating Derozio's lines: "We should not pause / Till every tyrant who on us hath trod / Lies humbled at our feet." And the *Bengal Chronicle* itself was then giving the world Derozio's

Oh Freedom ! there is something dear
E'en in the very name,
That lights the altar of the soul
With everlasting flame.

It is no wonder that Young Bengal of the late 1820s,—who were "to a man opposed to everything English", who loved to tell the British that they would do as the North Americans had done,⁴—gathered under Derozio's banner and made him their uncrowned king.

It was also perhaps not an accident that another Indian, a Hindu born in the same year that Derozio was born, took to writing patriotic poems in the year 1827,—Kasiprasad Ghosh. But he is also to be remembered as the second Indian who challenged the much propagated British view that India never enjoyed constitutional form of government in the past, that she always had despotism absolute. Historians have been kind to Kasiprasad. He has been taken notice of as a prodigy,—an Indian boy in his teens crossing swords with such veterans as James Mill. What has been always lost sight of is: (a) that the year was 1827 when Indians were agitating for a constitutional form of government, and (b) that some of the leaders of that agitation had been, for at least 6 years, challenging the Mill assessment. A comparison between the Rammohun assessment in 1821-22, 1823, 1826 and what Kasiprasad said in 1827, would be interesting, and is given below.

According to Kasiprasad, writing in 1827,

"The very laws which exalted them [the Brahmins] to the highest class of society ... wisely prohibited them ... the acquirement of ... earthly dignitaries [sic]. The monarchs of Hindustan, who were all

of the military [Kshatriya] class ... were ... obliged to be mild and observant of law ... If a king were to forego the duties prescribed to him by law, his rising ambition would be effectively checked by the fear of losing even his life from the public resentment."⁵

This is almost a paraphrase of what Rammohun Roy had said earlier on the subject, and what his friend Buckingham was in that very year re-circulating in India.⁶ [For Rammohun's views, the reader is referred to Chapter 4.] Not irrelevant is the point that, according to Rammohun, after Parasuram had subdued despotically minded rulers, "India enjoyed peace and harmony for a great many centuries." According to Kasiprasad, "no civil broils, except in the time of Parasuram, are known to have taken place in Hindustan before the conquest of the Mahommedans."

(We should have, but have not, remembered that when people living under despotism openly circulate: a king foregoing "the duties prescribed to him by law" runs the risk of "losing even his life", they do so with some great end in view. The risk that Rammohun had taken in 1821-26, the risk that Kasiprasad was taking in 1827, the risk that Kasiprasad's classmates took shortly after when they declared they would go the American way,—make sense if only they had in view some objective for which it was worth taking great risks. Historians have missed the point that Kasiprasad in 1827 was not crossing swords with James Mill whose comments had appeared about a decade earlier;⁷ Kasiprasad was acting as a spokesman of the agitation which was just then convulsing his city.

The stage

The exact area of operation is not known. But it is sufficiently clear that the sponsors of the programme had aimed at making their operation as broad based as possible.

That they wanted to cut across geographical as well as cultural barriers, is indicated by the tell-tale fact that they chose Upper Hindoostan languages,—Urdoo and Persian,

for the propagation of their political views. By this one stroke the English educated Bengal politicians extended their programme of indoctrination outside the limits of Bengal and of people knowing Bengali or English only.

In the opening number of their first Persian language paper, the *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*, they specifically mentioned their plan of meeting the needs of "particularly the people of Upper Hindoostan."⁸ Which class of people did they mean? The Nawabs and Ameers? The common people? Or, everybody living there? It might not have been, but very fortunately is, possible to answer the question. For we have with us an official survey of what these papers talked about, as also of the reaction thereto of the Nawabs and Ameers.

We find, the papers did not speak in abstract terms only, nor did they just discuss Bengal in Upper Hindusthan languages. They discussed Upper Hindusthan itself. What exactly they said is not known. But we know that they were discussing

"openly and unreservedly the system of government in Oude and in other states allied to the British Government".

In other words, the sponsors had extended their favourite practice of discussing the systems of government to Upper Hindusthan theatres.

In the survey referred to above, the discussions were dubbed as "attacks", as "unceasing clamours" against the powers that be. We also get :

"The official remonstrances received from the King of Oude and the despatches from the Resident at Lucknow show that the attacks above alluded to have excited very deep feelings of disgust and dissatisfaction in the mind of our ally."⁹

Evidently, the people whose needs prompted the Bengal politicians to opt for Upper Hindusthan languages, were not the Nawabs and Ameers whom their efforts disgusted and dissatisfied.

Did these discussions reach those who suffered from the

ministrations of the Nawabs and Ameers, that is, the general body of the people? Evidently again, they did. For, the Nawabs and Ameers got more flustered because the attacks were being made

"in a form immeasurably more offensive and distressing to the existing Government of Oude, that is to say, in the very language which is read and understood by every well educated native throughout India."¹⁰

The message must have reached at least those amongst the general body of the people who were well educated,—not in English, but Persian. The fact that their rulers spoke through this group's paper when they wanted to speak to their people, also gives a measure of the importance attained by their papers.¹¹ⁱ (Not irrelevant is the development that some time after the Government felt constrained to ask the Serampore Missionaries to run a Persian language paper.¹¹ⁱⁱ

We have other indications also that attempts were made to broad-base the programme, to involve in it as many people as possible. According to knowledgeable circles, India was then being systematically flooded with anti-British propaganda.¹² It is more than likely that several, perhaps many, groups of people, hailing from different parts of the country, were responsible for such propaganda. But there are indications that our group of politicians also played a part in that game. This aspect has been discussed earlier.¹³

In the second stage of its operation, i e., in 1826-28, the agitation spread over all the three Presidencies and became the most talked about subject "among all classes of the community."¹⁴

Organisation

No movement can play its full part unless there is a well thought out plan and a body to see to its implementation. Spontaneous upsurges are heavenly things; but spontaneity at every stage means confusion. We have seen that there was then a well thought out plan. We shall here take notice of the organisational arrangements.

Since 1824 Buckinghams were running in London a political paper, called the *Oriental Herald*. In January 1827 they took steps to found a body under the name of the British Indian Association. Its prospectus was said to have been "drawn up by some sincere and ardent friends of India"; its programme included agitating for "better system of government" for India. Its headquarters was to be in London, with branch committees in Edinburgh, Dublin etc. Boards of Assistance were to be established "in Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, ... formed of British and Native Indian members in equal portions." Its London address was the same as that of the *Oriental Herald*, viz., 22 Tavistock Square.¹⁵

About 5 or 6 months earlier, the aforesaid Buckingham group's counterpart in India, comprising Rammohun Roy, Dwarkanath Tagore, Prosunnocoomar Tagore, Theodore Dickens, James Sutherland etc., acting under the leadership of the first named, revived the Calcutta Unitarian Committee which had been originally founded in September 1821, by Rammohun Roy and his first European convert William Adam. (The revived organization was, later, proposed to be called The British Indian Unitarian Association.) This Committee made the services of its missionary-cum-chief executive, Rev. William Adam, available to the anti-government publicity front then getting into shape in Calcutta,—not only as editor of the *Bengal Chronicle*, but also as owner-editor of the *Calcutta Chronicle*.¹⁶ The Committee also "rented the *Hurkaru* public rooms which were attached to the *Hurkaru* newspaper and library."¹⁷ This second arrangement made it possible for the organizers of the aforesaid anti-government publicity front of Rammohun Roy, Theodore Dickens, James Sutherland, William Adam etc. to meet and confer amongst themselves without rousing suspicion of the authorities. Incidentally, even if the authorities grew suspicious, they would have found it difficult to take any adequate preventive step

against this body. For, its London supporters were then circulating in England :

There is a group in India led by Rammohun Roy "who laboured consistently to support the cause of Christianity by showing how superior it is to the idolatrous systems of the Hindus," "who has embraced Christianity and who maintains a Christian place of worship and a Christian Press almost entirely at his own expense."¹⁸

As for the possible objection to this group's 'deistic tendencies', England was getting :

"When deism shall have uprooted the weeds of idolatrous polytheism, then may the disenchanted mind be profitably sown with Christianity."¹⁹

With Wilberforce, senior Macaulay and junior Grant, and their friends then active in England, it was indeed near impossible for the already much harassed government of Lord Amherst to declare the Calcutta Unitarian Committee illegal, or to restrict its activities. It was especially so, because the said Committee took care to publicise that its members believed "that no greater misfortune could happen to India than the dissolution of its connexion with Great Britain", and that its chief spokesman Rammohun Roy publicly prayed for the British rule to last in India for centuries to come.²⁰ Read between the lines, the Calcutta Unitarian Committee's revival in the period concerned was a political move of great importance. And it had a respectable precedent. Just about the time that the Indian Unitarian Association in Calcutta was engaging in political activity aimed at securing political rights for heathen Indian people, its London counterpart, the British Unitarian Association, was engaging in political activity aimed at emancipating Roman Catholic Irish people.²¹

(We feel we should add a note here. A more respectable explanation of the revival of the Unitarian Committee would be that at about this time Rammohun Roy and his Unitarian friends had felt interested in effecting socio-religious reforms through an organisation like this, and so they revived it. This more respectable explanation does not

stand a wash. During the period that the revived Committee remained active, it did nothing to effect socio-religious reforms beyond arranging to hold weekly congregational service; and from the very first this service "received little support from avowed Unitarians", "even a majority of the Committee regularly absented themselves." And when William Adam,—who appears to have sincerely wished the religious part of the programme to thrive,—felt frustrated and "proposed that he should be sent on a missionary journey to Madras", the Committee

"refused consent, on Rammohun's representations chiefly that the funds could not stand the cost and that Mr. Adam was indispensable to Calcutta.... [When Adam] requested the Committee to point out some other form of missionary service", the Committee saw no "fit mode in which Mr. Adam can employ himself as a Unitarian Missionary"."

Could it be that Rammohun Roy, Theodore Dickens, James Sutherland etc. got annoyed with Adam for his anti-government propaganda? It could not be. All these people joined the political committee formed in May 1827 to challenge the authority of the government just as Adam had been suggesting in his editorials.²³ Verily, the Calcutta Unitarian Committee, considered as a body for carrying on socio-religious reforms, was as ineffectual as any could be; while considered as a cover for carrying on a political agitation, it played a truly significant part.)

By about March 1827 it must have been felt that some organization other than a body called the Calcutta Unitarian Committee should take charge of the operations. Many had by then showed interest in the move who would not have liked to associate themselves with the Unitarians, neither amongst the Hindus nor amongst the Christians. And included in them were not only men fit to be just camp followers; some of them had outstanding ability besides wealth and influence. For example, Radhakanta Deb, John Palmer. A more broad-based organization, without anything objectionable attached, was therefore considered a desideratum. It was at this stage that the agitators began

to use the name "Committee of Petitioners". Its Chairman was John Palmer, and it was housed in the premises of his firm known as Messrs. Palmer & Co.²⁴

On 23 May 1827 Calcuttans, assembled at a public meeting, formally appointed a Committee of 61 members, as listed below, to run the agitation.²⁵

Adam, W., Revd.	Hare, David.
Ajoordia persaud	Hastie, R.
Abeerchund.	Hamirmull, Roybhan.
Barnard, W. S.	Laruleta, M.
Boyd, W. S.	Livingston, W. A.
Bunnerjie, Radamadeb.	Lyall, J. N.
Colvin, A.	Leyburn, G.
Calder, J.	Mullin.
Cullen, J.	Mullick, Beernursing.
Clarke, Longueville.	Mullick Ramgopaul.
Clark, W. F.	Mukund, Daby Doss Baal.
Chisholm, G.	Palmer, J.
Chund, Mootie.	Prinsep, C. R.
Cowasjee, Rustomjie.	Patrick, W.
Chund, Mootie.	Paxton, J. W.
Dickens, Theodore.	Rickets, J. W.
Deb, Radakunt.	Roy, Maha Rajah Buddinauth.
Dhur, Bungsee.	Roy, Rammohun.
Dutt, Russomoy.	Smith, William.
Doss, Obychurn.	Smith, J. (G. ?)
Doss, Bridgebhokun.	Sutherland, J.
Doss, Muttra.	Sheddham, W. P. R.
Doss, Brijuman.	Sib Crishen, Maha Raja.
Doss, Ram.	Trotter, E.
Doss, Radakissen.	Tate, W.
Gisborne, M.	Tagore, Hurrymohun.
Gillanders.	Tagore, Prussonocomar.
Hogg, J. W.	Vrignon, F.
Hogg, C.	Winter, R.
Hunter.	Wight, A.
Hamilton, Claude.	Young, J.

Out of the 61 listed above, 23 were Hindus (Bengalees, Marwaris, Parsees) ; 14 are positively known to have been Europeans. Of the remaining 24, some were Europeans and the rest Eurasians.

To complete our records, we should take into account the activities of certain other bodies which added to the strength of the movement,—substantially, though indirectly. For example, business or mercantile organizations, which in today's language would be called 'Chamber of Commerce', played a significant part. The two bodies, so far identified, were the Native Chamber of Commerce of Benares and the Marwari Chamber of Commerce of Calcutta.³⁶

Public agitation

The agitators came into the open in the second quarter of 1827, when, as we shall see, they publicly challenged the authorities on several issues.

CHAPTER 14

THE RUNNING STORY

Normally, assessments of this kind do not include any chronologically or otherwise arranged list of events. Most of the developments are assumed to be known to everybody. Ours seems to be an exceptional case. For, this submission has been found necessary primarily because certain developments of the 1820s have not been taken into account in any of the studies devoted to the period. We are therefore including a list of events. The list is not exhaustive ; it includes chiefly, though not solely, events hitherto overlooked.

1826

December 8.—The *Bengal Chronicle* publishes an article offensive to the Government.¹ It was a post-mortem study of the Burma War, on the same line as that of the Rammohun (Mugmoodvre) letter to President of the Board of Control, C. W. W. Wynn, discussed earlier.

December 9.—The Government cancels the license of the *Bengal Chronicle* ; restores it on the 11th, on receipt of a letter of surrender. It was hoped that this would serve as a warning to other papers.²

Calcutta Unitarian Committee, (a non-political organization run by the Rammohun Roy group for socio-religious reforms,) permits its stipendiary Missionary cum Chief Executive, Rev. William Adam, to engage in journalistic activities with a political and aggressively anti-government bias. Adam takes editorial charge of the *Bengal Chronicle*.³

December 14.—The Government finalises a new tax measure, called Stamp (Duties) Regulation No. XII of 1826, which was to affect everybody in Calcutta. (Indians living outside Calcutta had a similar tax imposed on them since 1824. Now all the rest in the Bengal Presidency including

Calcutta got it. The other Presidencies were to have it sooner than later.) The Press Regulation of 1823 forbade adverse discussion of such topics. Everybody perhaps felt unhappy ; but nobody gave any public expression to his resentment.

1827

January.—British Indian Association (an organization with the objective, *inter alia*, of achieving "better system of government" for India) is founded by the Buckingham group in London.⁴ About the same time attempts are said to have been made by the Rammohun group to rejuvenate its aforesaid Calcutta Unitarian Committee.⁵

January 12.—The *John Bull* announces the imposition of the new tax. Calcuttans take the announcement in silence, except a particular group.

January 19.—The very paper which had tasted the wrath of the Government about a month earlier, the *Bengal Chronicle*, publishes a scathing attack on the Government, resting its objections on a novel ground,—that unless the people affected had earlier given their consent, no tax is valid. It referred to the new measure as

"the introduction into ... India of that very principle of Government which lost Great Britain her American Colonies, viz., taxation without representation".⁶

Not many stirred even when reminded of this war cry raised during the American War of Independence.

January 25.—Viliers Holcroft, a Eurasian, obtains license for the *Calcutta Chronicle*. The Calcutta Unitarian Committee permits William Adam, first to run the second *Chronicle* as its editor, then to function as its sole proprietor as well. The other *Chronicle* becomes the property of Samuel Smith & Co ; it appears that James Sutherland, its founder editor, resumed the editorial responsibility.⁷

January 30.—The *Calcutta Chronicle* wrote :

"If the silence of the Press may be considered a safe criterion by which the interest taken by the public on any subject may be

estimated, it would seem that the intended Stamp Tax is to be submitted to [even] without any appeal ... against its imposition."

February 9.—The *Bengal Chronicle* again reminded its readers :

"It is to the principle of the tax and to the construction of law upon which it is founded that we object. Its principle ... violates a fundamental maxim of the British Constitution."

By that time Calcuttans in general appear to have become interested. News of their stirring finds mention in other papers also, for example, in the *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, and some time later in the Vernacular paper *Oodunta Martanda*.⁸ Discussions at various levels took place and resulted in deciding to send a remonstrance to the Government. A meeting was arranged to finalise the draft of the remonstrance. A body called the 'Petitioners Committee' was formed for the purpose under the chairmanship of John Palmer. Its office, if it then had a regular office, was housed in the premises of the firm of Messrs. Palmer & Co.⁹

The remonstrance was addressed to the Vice President (Lord Combermere, in the absence of Governor General Lord Amherst) in Council, in the form of a petition. But it looked extremely strange as a petition. It prayed that the Vice President be kind enough to drop the proposed tax ; and in the same breath it challenged the authority of the said Vice President in Council to levy any tax at all. At least three papers went on circulating and re-circulating this strange petition.

April 12.—The Vice President in Council replies to the Calcutta petition, assuring that

"It will be the wish of Government to correct any inconvenience or hardship that may be of sufficient magnitude to require amendment"¹⁰

April 25.—Calcutta petitioners discuss the reply at a public meeting ; reject the Government's offer of sympathetic consideration of "any inconvenience or hardship .. of sufficient magnitude to require amendment."

April 26.—A second petition is sent out on the following lines. If there be any doubt as to their interpretation of the existing law that the Local Government had no authority to levy taxes, they would move the Parliament to pass a Declaratory Act upholding their interpretation; till then they wanted the tax law to be kept in abeyance.¹¹

April end.—The Radicals amongst the Calcuttans realised that petitioning the Local Government or appealing to the superior authorities in London was not enough. The *Bengal Chronicle* said :

The petition should "not be allowed to leave the shores of India without carrying with it such a deep and general impression as will make a lasting impression upon the minds of our legislators at home of the impolicy at least if not of the illegality of the proposed impost."

April 27.—The Government "took the opportunity of conveying that they have no objection in the present instance that a petition ... should be forwarded to the Parliament."¹² Even this infuriated the Radicals.

May 1.—The *Calcutta Chronicle* wrote, commenting on the above :

"Do the Government then assert the right of stopping an appeal to Parliament if they choose, and is it by an act of grace and forbearance on the part of the Government that we are permitted 'in the present instance' to avail of this privilege, which may hereafter in all other instances be denied to the community of Calcutta ?"¹³

It claimed the privilege of approaching the Parliament as one of the inalienable rights of the people. At the same time it did not expect anything substantial to result from approaching the Parliament. For, according to it,

"Even there the interests of ministers too nearly coincide with that of our immediate rulers to allow us to hope for a favourable result. [Yet the paper approved of the idea of approaching the Parliament, because] it will bring the affairs of India under review and teach the Government at home that there is a public here who are not disposed to submit passively to every dictum of authority. ... The sooner this lesson is taught the better."

May 3.—68 Hindus and 23 Europeans *plus* Eurasians, acting on behalf of the petitioners, ask the Sheriff of Calcutta to arrange a meeting at the Town Hall,

"for the purpose of taking into consideration the expediency of presenting a petition or petitions to Parliament for Declaratory Acts or if necessary for new enactments relative to" *inter alia* "the powers vested in the local government by the 98th and 99th sec. 53 Geo. III Cap 155."¹⁴

The meeting is accordingly arranged to be held on 17 May.

May 12.—The Sheriff intimates that under the authority of a letter of the Court of Directors the Government has disallowed the proposed meeting.¹⁵

May 15.—This order so infuriated the Radicals amongst the petitioners, that their paper, the *Bengal Chronicle*, threw all cautions to the wind and came out with :

"Solemn questions arise ... whether the local government of the United Company of Merchants trading to the East Indies does indeed possess ... a power which the Sovereign of Great Britain could not and dare not exercise."

Calcuttans in general, the majority of whom were, not unnaturally, cautious and sober minded, played at a somewhat lower key. They decided to hold the proposed meeting at a private place instead of at the Government-owned Town Hall. The venue chosen was the Calcutta Exchange Building, and the day the 23rd of May. A notice to this effect was issued on 15 May under the signature of 29 Hindus and 12 Europeans *plus* Eurasians.¹⁶

Calcutta got the rumour that the Government was thinking "of employing the [military] force to put down such audacity." According to a letter published in London, the Government had actually thought of employing the military, — His Majesty's 14th Regiment, — to disperse the gathering, but ultimately gave up that idea on the advice of its Advocate General.¹⁷

May 22.— The *Bengal Chronicle* wrote :

"We trust we need not remind the public that the fuller the attendance at the meeting at the Exchange tomorrow, the greater will be the weight attached to the petitions which the meeting may adopt."

At the same time it issued a caution also :

"It is very important however that those who attend the meeting

should bear in mind the necessity of observing a stricter decorum, ... because there will be at that meeting enemies of the rights of the people who will gladly seize on any pretext that may justify their own shameful tergiversation and abandoned servility."

Calcuttans acted as a responsible body of people. They flocked to the meeting, which they had heard was to be militarily handled. According to the *Government Gazette* itself, "A great number of Natives were collected." According to the *John Bull*, they did not raise any issue outside those in the official agenda.¹⁸

The 23 May 1827 assembly was not given any name by its organisers. Their adversaries derisively called it 'The Calcutta Parliament'. The name stuck. Sometimes the agitators themselves referred to it by that name.¹⁹ We also propose to use it in the absence of an official name. Its very first resolution was to ensure

"that the Legislature [the British Parliament] will be pleased to pass an Act declaring that the 53 George III C 155 sec 98, 99 ... does not import the Governor General in Council [even] with the sanction of the Court of Directors and the Board of Control to impose any taxes within Calcutta other than duties of customs."²⁰

It was also proposed at the meeting

"that at the expiration of the Charter it is expedient that a Local Legislature be created which should possess in conjunction with the Governor General in Council the power of taxation."²¹

The Chairman, "John Palmer, observed that it did not square with the objects of the meeting; he did not disapprove of it, but it was foreign and therefore not appropriate at present."²²

The strategy of the time envisaged two steps. It was drawn up by the Constitutional Law experts of Calcutta. According to them,

"There can be no doubt that the privilege of taxing themselves [originally belonging to the people] has been taken away from the inhabitants of Calcutta by different sections of the two statutes already mentioned and that authority to impose certain taxes has been thereby granted and confined to the Local Government."²³

In the circumstances they advised that a petition should

"be agreed upon or sanctioned by a public meeting praying that the

power of taxing and levying penalties be taken away from the Government and the Supreme Court and be exercised by the Parliament alone, unless the inhabitants of Calcutta who are deemed qualified to pay should also be deemed qualified to grant."³⁴

The 23 May 1827 meeting was seized with the first step, that "the power of taxing and levying penalties be taken away from the Government"; the second step was to be considered separately and later. That appears to have been the majority view at the time. We shall find as we proceed that the minority view, that of simultaneously claiming for themselves the power of taxing and levying penalties on the tax payers, became the platform as the year grew older.³⁵ It is not perhaps irrelevant to recall to mind that the Radicals, represented by the *Bengal Chronicle*, had openly taken this stand as early as 19 January 1827 when they raised the cry of 'No taxation without representation'.

It was realised that if the Government was to be given any hard knock, the general body of the people must be got involved. But how were they to be reached? They lived outside the range of English language broadcasts. The 'Calcutta Parliament' resolved therefore "that the petitions be translated into the Hindusthanee and Bengalee languages".³⁶ That the efforts made to get the general body of the people involved succeeded, is evidenced by such reports as the "Court was excessively crowded", "a great number of natives were collected", etc.³⁷

The other steps resolved upon by the 23 May meeting was to extend the agitation all over the country; to send emissaries to England to influence public opinion there; to raise funds for carrying on these activities. And, of course, it appointed a body to run the programme as chalked out. By another resolution Messrs. Alexander & Co. were appointed to act as Treasurers.³⁸

May 25.—On this day and for some time thereafter the programme as resolved upon was given wide publicity all over the country, which "excited more conversation [than

anything other than the Burma War] amongst all classes of the community" "in [all] the three Presidencies."²⁹

May 29.—Anticipating punitive measures on the Government side, the Radicals proposed through the *Calcutta Chronicle*,

"that if the Government should prosecute a certain firm in Calcutta [or anyone else] with a view of making them the scapegoats as it was called in the case of the Stamp Act, the community should indemnify them for the loss likely to be entailed on them thereby."³⁰

This suggestion, if acted upon, would have made a mockery of most of the punitive powers of the Government.

May 31.—For making the above suggestion, which was undoubtedly of great potentiality, the Government cancelled the license of the *Calcutta Chronicle*.³¹

June.—As per the rules, for any regulation to have the force of law it had to be registered (approved) by the Supreme Court. As "there was every reason to believe that the Chief Justice Sir Charles Grey would not give his sanction without which it cannot become a law",³² the Government appears to have at first tried to bypass such registration. Following however the agitation in May, the authorities decided ultimately to observe the formality of registration.

July.—The Supreme Court discussed the matter on 3 and 5 July and delivered its judgement in favour of registration on the 12th. According to the correspondents of the *Asiatic Journal*, the Bengal papers were "filled chiefly with the debates in the Supreme Court on the subject of the Indian Stamp Act."³³ The *Bengal Chronicle* said ;

"The importance of the discussion, which will take place at 10 A. M. this day [8 July] in the Supreme Court, makes it imperative on us to call the attention of our readers to it, though we are rather apprehensive that the Court will be too crowded, ... that the communities require no stimulus to induce their attendance."³⁴

The paper was right. We get even in the anti-agitation papers : "The Court was excessively crowded."³⁵ It was so on all the three days.

The agitators had hoped that "the Chief Justice Sir Charles Grey would not give his sanction without which it [the Regulation] cannot become a law." Apparently, their hopes had got the better of their judgement. Their prophecy did not come true. The Supreme Court, including its Chief Justice Grey, gave its sanction. Thereupon the agitators came out with :

"Are we to be told in the 19th century that the opinions of judges ... are the only criterions of right and wrong ? ... And is the bar so totally eclipsed, reduced so low in ability and research as to render their arguments and observations not only unworthy of record but of perusal ?"³⁶

What provoked this outburst was perhaps the attitude, the attempt to underplay the agitation, of a section of the Calcutta Press. When, according to the *Chronicles* in Calcutta and the *Asiatic Journal* in London, the capital city of Bengal was so much excited over a specific issue, the *Calcutta Monthly Journal* covered the registration news with just these two lines : "At length the question of the Stamp Regulation is settled. The Bench, we understand, have this date decided unanimously for the registry." And then unblushingly wrote : "In these dull times perhaps an alligator paragraph even may not be unacceptable to our readers ;" and gave 5 pages of alligators.³⁷ Referring to the 'Bench' of the *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, the *Bengal Chronicle* wrote :

"Wretched indeed would have been the fate of England if the decisions of the Bench had been invariably deemed conclusive on the merits of cases, more particularly of cases partaking of a political character, and clipped would have been the wings of liberty"³⁸

August-September.—On registration by the Supreme Court, the Stamp (Duties) Regulation acquired the force of law. And began the 'No tax Campaign' of 1827. One specific case of violating the said law occurred in August—September. The violator was a native firm of the name of Rajkishore Dutt & Co. We have singled out this case because the Government took action against it.³⁹

CHAPTER 16

THE CAMPAIGN

The campaign was in two halves,—the first waged in India and the second in England. The first half is the subject of this chapter.

The essence of the campaign in India was non-cooperation,—not only passive, not only just withdrawal into one's shell, but active also, involving frontal attacks on the authorities. The attacks were made on (a) the Press Regulation of 1823, and (b) and (c) the Stamp (Duties) Regulations of 1824 and 1826.

(a) *The Press Regulation of 1823*

We have all heard that certain Calcuttans resented the gagging of the Bengal Press and memorialised the authorities for its repeal. And the resentment culminated in the discontinuance of Rammohun Roy's *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*. That was passive non-cooperation at its best and purest. And that meant, Rammohun Roy ceased to give the authorities any trouble, any headache, thereafter.

We have now for submission a different picture. Rammohun Roys did not give up their journalistic activities as a protest against the Press Regulation. Rammohun himself could not of course act in the first person ; his declaration announcing the death of his *Mirat* would have mocked him if he did.¹ Instead, he arranged for his associates to bring out papers, agreeing to observe all the rules of the game, and then to run them as if there was no gagging order at all. Till how long ? Till the offending paper was axed. And then to run another on the same plan.

We have seen earlier how the group responsible for the indoctrination programme of 1820-23, then under the joint leadership of Rammohun Roy and James Silk Buckingham, had functioned in the years 1823-26, i. e., after Bucking-

ham's forced departure from India. They had then run the *Calcutta Journal* (axed in December 1823), the *Columbian Press Gazette* (axed in January 1826), the *Bengal Chronicle* (threatened in August and December 1826). We shall now cover their journalistic activities in the period 1827-28.

The most important clause of the 1823 Press Regulation was that nothing should ever be published which could "bring them [the authorities] into hatred or contempt, ... excite resistance to their orders."

With such a guide-line before them (and the knowledge that any moment the licenses to run their papers could be revoked, and the concerned press penalised, and the editors, born in Europe, deported,)—the *Bengal Chronicle*, the *Calcutta Chronicle*, the *Bengal Hurkaru* went on circulating in print in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, as also in London :

The authorities are introducing here "that very principle of government which lost Great Britain her American colonies, viz., taxation without representation."

The protest, even if unsuccessful otherwise, "will teach the Government at home that there is a public here who are not disposed to submit passively to every dictum of authority. ... The sooner this lesson is taught the better."³

When "the Government ... thought fit to assert the power of preventing public meetings", they wrote :

"Solemn questions arise ... whether the local government of the United Company of Merchants trading to the East Indies does indeed possess ... a power which the Sovereign of Great Britain could not and dare not exercise."³

"No fear of consequences shall deter us from endeavouring to enforce upon the public mind our own deep and settled conviction that the Government of the East India Company does not possess ... an undefined power."⁴

When specifically accused of breathing "a tone of defiance to authority", they wrote :

"We measure our obedience to any Government by the law, and we measure our respect by its obedience to the law. These are the principles we would apply to the Imperial Government of the United Kingdom itself and shall we not apply it here ?"

"It may be a phrase with lawyers that Parliament is omnipotent. The phrase is absurd, almost blasphemous. The omnipotence that is meant must be exercised within the charmed circle of the constitution. When it moves beyond it, Parliament itself becomes legally impotent,"⁵

It was around 15. 5. 1827 that the *Bengal Chronicle* wrote as above. On 31. 5. 1827 its sister paper *Calcutta Chronicle* got axed for having published articles "in direct violation of the Regulations regarding the Press." Within about a month and a half this group of the Calcutta papers appears to have recovered from the shock. We get in the 21st July issue of the *Bengal Chronicle*: "Our readers know that the enemies of a Free Press in India are divided in the grounds of their hostility but ... [they unite] for the attainment of the great end of keeping [the Press] in subjection." The same week wrote the *Bengal Hurkaru*:

"On looking at the recent outrages on the Press in the different dependencies of Great Britain, we are struck with the remarkable coincidence as to the period of their occurrence. That at Sydney, that at Van Diem's Island and that at the Cape occurred ... all in the pleasant month of May [the same month which saw the death of the *Calcutta Chronicle*.] The outrage in Canada and some others [occurred] ... a few months sooner."

"How it happens that in all colonies of all countries the chief hostility of the mother country ... is to freedom of discussion? ... That is the question to the solution of which ... all these outrages on the Press must lead. When they rise up in judgement, ... cry aloud with one voice as it were for enquiry and redress, — Canada, Sydney, Van Diem's Island, the West Indies, the Cape and — (but we are proceeding beyond the limits of Parliamentary protection.)"

The *Bengal Chronicle* republished the above in its 28th July issue, and for this it was taken to task by the editor of the *John Bull*, the unofficial mouthpiece of the Government. Thereupon the *Bengal Chronicle* wrote on the 31st July:

"Does he think that in Demerara the law armed Sir Benjamin D'Urban with power to put down a valuable journal and ruin its proprietor? Does he think that in Canada the law had armed the

public functionaries with power to break into the editor's house and demolish all his press etc. and throw the debris into the lake? ... We will not travel further eastward into the limits of the Company's trade."

In its 16th August submission the *Bengal Chronicle* raised a fundamental issue and wrote: "The favourite dogma of the enemies of a Free Press is that India ever was and ever must be subjected to a despotic government."

When the struggle for a Free Press gained a point in France, this paper rejoiced rather too loudly, *vide* its 11. 9. 1827 and 13. 9. 1827 issues.

We have noticed before that in February-March 1827 Justice Smith had observed that the East India Company's Charter might not be renewed on its old terms; he was suspended from service in March, and dismissed thereafter. In April 1827 the *Calcutta Chronicle* published this news; its licence was cancelled next month.

Fully aware of this ominous background, the *Bengal Chronicle* wrote in its 20th October issue:

"A very general opinion prevails at home, we believe, that the Charter will never be renewed ... but be this as it may, it is certain that ministerial influence over the affairs of India will be drawn closer ... Interested motives or prejudices have endeavoured to convey the impression that there is in this country something so anomalous that it is unfitted for any of those benefits of our free constitution in which some colonies of the crown already participate. The day is rapidly passing when such deception could be successfully practised. ... [Europeans and Eurasians] are communicating that knowledge to the aborigines which will render them invaluable as good and equally dangerous as bad subjects."

(We do not know for certain who wrote these lines. But we know that not long after Editor Sutherland's friend and political associate Rammohun Roy said:

When "the native character becomes elevated from constant intercourse with Europeans and the acquirements of general and political knowledge ... is it possible that they will not have the spirit as well as the inclination to resist effectually any unjust and oppressive measures serving to degrade them in the scale of society? ... Were India to share one-fourth of the knowledge and energy of that country [Ireland] she

would prove ... either useful and profitable ... as an ally of the British Empire or troublesome and annoying as a determined enemy".⁶⁾

The 1823 Press Regulation specifically forbade publishing anything which would rouse antipathy against the British Government. With full knowledge of this provision, first the *Bengal Hurkaru* and then its sister paper the *Bengal Chronicle* published for open circulation :

"Political writers ... have recorded in glowing colours the horrors of the French Revolution. ... Who has not accorded to the sentiment that the endurance of any tyranny is preferable to its overthrow at the cost of so much of bloodshed and of crime ? But is it not forgotten in drawing that conclusion that under legitimate governments atrocities are sometimes perpetrated at which the heart recoils and the blood runs cold ? ... Do we speak of infidel or legitimate barbarian governments ? By no means. We refer now to the government of one of the most enlightened and powerful nation, that of Great Britain in the reign of George the Third, which has seldom been exceeded in the annals of the Grand Turk of Ali Pasha :

"Whenever any Protestant was murdered [in Ireland] it was determined that a greater number of Catholics should be immediately put to death by the military and this without the lightest reference to their guilt or innocence of any implication in the rebellion. Here the troops of His Majesty formed themselves into a snare with the prisoners in their centre who prayed in vain for mercy until the signal for carnage was given, when nothing was to be heard but the terrible shrieks of the victims and the savage and exulting shouts of their murderers as they cut and hacked the wretches flying from one phalanx of bayonets to be transfixed upon another. This happened during the government of one of the most enlightened ... nations of Europe; that of Great Britain in the reign of George the Third."

It is to be noted that these atrocities had been committed about a quarter century earlier. Our Calcutta politicians resurrected those long buried atrocities just to hurl abuses on the British rulers of India of the time.

What could not be printed in India at all, was sent to

England, published there, and as there was no law regulating the import of printed material, the same was made available for Indian circulation also. Here is an example of what that meant. Just about the time when the *Bengal Chronicle* and the *Bengal Hurkaru* were putting before the country what atrocities the British were committing in other parts of the world, India got the April 1827 issue of the *Oriental Herald*, which had :

The Barrackpur Sepoys were "shot down by a fire opened by the artillery [kept hidden] and supported by the Royals, and when their battalion broke, they were charged by the cavalry. ... The men who fled to the river were snipped at and shot in the water." "Besides the native soldiers admitted to be slaughtered by their European fellow subjects, there were many instances of men, women and children, not belonging to the army at all, who were indiscriminately shot and destroyed."⁸

This was Indian news, gathered in India. As this was too hot for Indian printing, it was sent to England for circulation in England as well as India.

To ensure that nothing of importance was missed by the superior authorities in London, Buckingham took to reproducing the same in his *Oriental Herald*. Also leaflets incorporating those points were brought out in London and sent free to people of importance. Nobody in England, who mattered in a political sense, could remain unaware that a group of Calcutta politicians were repeatedly bringing the British authorities "into hatred or contempt" and exciting "resistance to their orders."

Also worth noticing is the fact that sometimes Buckingham himself told the authorities that his Calcutta colleagues were spreading sedition.⁹

Lastly, it is to be borne in mind that this Press Regulation was disobeyed openly and aggressively, week after week, for a period of about 24 months. And when in 1827 India was exhibiting such foolhardiness, she had fresh in her memory the case of Buckingham's and Arnot's deportation four years earlier, the case of the Barrackpore massacre:

three years earlier, the persecution of Rammohun Roy's son a year earlier, the case of wanton dismissal of a Senior Judge with 35 years of service to his credit, just then convulsing the city.

(b) *The Mofussil Stamp Regulation 1824*

We get the following reports from contemporary assessments :

"The Indians resisted the edict, perversely refusing to purchase stamps ; and the law became a dead letter."¹⁰

"No one in the Mofussil uses the stamps ; the natives continue their passive resistance in this passive way to their Act of 1824."¹¹

Before we proceed further in our consideration of this aspect, we should take notice that the non-payment of this as well as any other tax had two edges, both cutting deep, though not to the same extent. One was the loss to the government, *in money*, the other was its loss *in prestige*. As the government was then in dire need of every rupee they could raise, anybody not paying any tax in any manner,—like a thief hiding his tools or a robber flourishing his dagger,—inconvenienced the government to that extent. If somebody not merely withheld payment but openly declared that he was not paying and would not pay, he added insult to the injury, the government losing in money as well as in prestige.

As far as we can gather, in the case of this Mofussil tax, the Government lost mainly in money. But not solely, as is indicated by the following contemporary notings :

"The ryots and zeminders declared their determination rather to neglect their cultivation than to submit to the odious duty, and this appears to have had the salutary effect of procuring its abrogation."¹²

The mofussil people got away with it, "The local government not daring to enforce it for fear of exciting insurrections of which on similar grounds they had the experience of more than one example."¹³

"Government seems unwilling to provoke the Mofussil people by prosecution to more active resistance."¹⁴

"Everybody knew that, in practice, from the passive persevering resistance of the Natives, the Regulation was a dead letter."¹⁵

"It will remind the reader of the American resistance to the same imposition and the consequent loss of that country to England."¹⁶

The above are quotes from pro-agitation papers. The following is what a mouthpiece of the Government and of the East India Company, the London *Asiatic Journal*, reported on the strength of a finding of its counterpart in Calcutta, the *John Bull* :

"It would appear from the *John Bull* that the late [1824, Mofussil] regulations of Government with regard to stamps do not enjoy much popularity and the native merchants at Benares have entered into a sort of combination to oppose the law by agreeing [not only not to pay tax themselves but] not to accept stamped [i.e. tax-paid] hoondies."¹⁷

It is a probability that these reports are exaggerations or even outright lies circulated by partisan papers or by over-credulous and gullible pro-government ones. But to brush them aside it is not enough to show that later histories do not contain any such admission. And when we consult the calendar, it looks like more than a probability that the Government dared not "enforce it for fear of exciting insurrections". For, according to the calendar, the period was 1824-26, during which Lord Amherst (or his spokesman) thus lamented :

"Last year these reports produced only partial disturbances ... but I fear that this year after the dussera we are to expect some more serious and extreme commotions."¹⁸

(c) *The Calcutta Stamp Regulation 1826*

In respect of this Regulation, we have :

"The Stamp Regulation was to have been in operation from the 1st of May [1827], but no one bought stamps and it was in vain that the Government organised a cordon of stamp offices, ... offered discounts etc. ; still no one would buy."¹⁹

"The inhabitants of Calcutta maintain ... the illegality not of a stamp tax only, but of any tax (except custom and the like) imposed in the same manner [without the people's consent]."²⁰

What the Government lost in money, we have no sure means of knowing, though we have contemporary assessments to the effect that the treasuries did not get much by

way of this tax. What the Government lost in prestige, was unquestionably immense. For, both the determination of the Government to make the people pay this tax and the determination of the people not to pay it by one means or another, continued to be repeatedly circulated both in England and India.

The killing blow in this respect however was not struck by reports circulated in newspapers or speeches made at meetings, but by an actual disobedience of the said Regulation by a Hindu Company of the name of Raj Kissors Dutt and Co. This company disobeyed the law by drawing a Bill of Exchange for 20,000 rupees on unauthorised (unstamped) papers and then took it to the firm which was acting as the Treasurer of the agitation under our study, - Alexander and Co. We learn from the evidence of the Stamp Duties Collector, Paul Marriot Wynch, that he was then trying to get hold of cases of the use of unstamped paper. Alexander and Co. made the Rajkissors Dutt and Co's bill available to this Wynch. (They appear to have done so deliberately. Others might not have known who Wynch was and what his business was. But Alexander and Co. was very likely to have known him and his business.) As the last user was Alexander and Co., the Government filed a case against its directors. The bill was drawn on 19. 9. 1827 ; the case was filed on 2. 2. 1828. The Supreme Court hearings were held on 13th and 14th August 1828.

We get from the *Calcutta Monthly Journal* of August 1828³¹ that "James Young, Thomas Bracken ... [of Alexander & Co.] had accepted a Bill of Exchange not drawn on a stamped paper, by which they forfeited a penalty of twenty times the value of the stamps." The total fine payable was a paltry sum of Rs. 160/-. The offenders, brought before the Supreme Court, could have easily put an end to their trouble by paying the fine, even if they did not plead for mercy. Instead, they challenged the

right of the Government to impose any tax on them without their consent.

The Court was filled to its capacity. Apparently, Calcutta had known not only that so and so would be tried for tax evasion, but also that they would challenge the authority of the Government to levy taxes without their consent. It is doubtful however whether they could have anticipated the outcome.

All eyes were on the jurors. And to get a correct measure of the courage shown by twelve Calcuttans sitting as jurors in that trial, we have to bear in mind that they were squarely pitted against the Supreme Government conducting a prestige case ; that it was imperative for the said Government to win the case if it was to save not only its face but also its budget ; that the jurors being Europeans, the said Government had the right and power to deport any or all of them without showing any reason. And the Advocate General had practically told them that they had no option but to find the accused guilty. We quote a portion of his speech :

"Whatever you may think of the propriety or unpropriety of any regulation ... you will only be guided by a sense of public duty. Much discussion has taken place on this subject ; public attention has been drawn to it and, I am sorry to say that, attempts have been made to influence the minds of the jury who were to try it ... No man will say that a Jury has the right of taking into its consideration the expediency ['the propriety'] of any law or regulation after its legal enactment."

The Chief Justice also said : "It is my duty to tell you that on this point of law you have no right to decide."

It was clear enough what the Government expected of the Jury. They were to start *from after the enactment of the regulation*. And since the regulation, as enacted, called any nonpayment of tax a legal offence, and since the accused, speaking through his counsel, did not deny the fact of nonpayment, according to the Advocate General, the Jury had no option but to declare the accused guilty.

And the way the defence counsel had admitted the fact of nonpayment of the tax in question, did not make things easier for the Jury.

The defence counsel had told the Court and the Jury, by a quotation from Blackstone, the renowned expert on Constitutional Law :

"No subject of England can be constrained to pay any aids or taxes even for the defence of the realm or the support of the Government but such as are imposed by his own consent or that of his representatives in Parliament."

[It meant that not only the Local Government in India but also the Parliament in Great Britain had no authority to levy tax on them, for they had no representative in the said Parliament.]

"If then this Stamp Duty has not been imposed by our consent through our representatives in Parliament, I say it is illegal."

And, apparently, referring to the Advocate General's claim that the Jury had no right to take "into its consideration the expediency of any law or regulation after its legal enactment", the defence counsel told the Jury :

"You are [also] to determine whether or not the regulation [itself] is conformable with the laws of the realm."

It was against this background, including the declaration that the tax claimed was illegal and not payable even if the country's defence was at stake, that we have to read and judge the matter of fact sentence in the *Calcutta Monthly Journal* "The Jury found for the defendant."

It is a bit strange that Indians have felt thrilled to read the story of the twelve jurors who "had found for the Seven Bishops" of England, but have never spared a single thought for those twelve dare-devils of Calcutta who, on the 13th and the 14th day of August 1828, risked deportation and acquitted Thomas Bracken.

To get an idea of the sensation this trial and its outcome created in the minds of the people, we have to recall their mortification a year back, when the same Supreme Court had accorded its approval to the Stamp Regulation.²²

That was in July 1827. By August 1828 things had changed to such an extent that the jurors had not accepted the sanction of the Supreme Court, in respect of the Stamp Regulation, as binding on them, and by their acquittal of Thomas Bracken had declared their rejection of the said Regulation.

The judges of the day rose up to the occasion, accepted the unanimous verdict of the jury, set the accused free. The Court, we said, was crowded to its capacity. What those present felt, we leave to the imagination of our readers to conjure up.

This was the blow which killed the Stamp Regulation of 1826, and, by killing it, forced the hands of the Government.⁹⁸

CHAPTER 16

THE CAPITULATION

'Capitulation' is a strong word. It has the potentiality of driving away serious readers. Yet we are making use of it. Because, as we get it, the term 'capitulation' expresses best what happened in 1829-30. We have been repeatedly advised to present the evidences only, leaving our readers free to draw their own conclusions. We have not abided by that very sensible advice. Because almost all the evidences used by us have always been before the eyes of all serious researchers on the period, yet nobody appears to have taken notice of many of them. We have decided therefore to present the evidences together with captions of our own, leaving our readers free to choose between our captions and those everybody has been till now living with.

Lord William Cavendish Bentinck, the new Governor General, took careful stock of his assets and liabilities. He spent about six months on this very essential task. And then, in February 1829,¹ he virtually capitulated and asked for terms. He had hardly any option.

The August 1828 trial and its outcome meant the death not only of the Calcutta tax of 1826, but also of all other past and future taxes imposed or to be imposed on India without the concerned people's representation. It meant the possible loss of more than 50 lakhs of sicca rupees a year² in revenue under stamp duties alone to a government which was then running at a deficit even with this income. It meant for Bentinck personally the possibility of being recalled before he had paid off his huge debts and of landing in the court of insolvency.³ It meant for the East India Company the certainty of getting adverse terms at the time of the next renewal of its charter. Both Bentinck and the East India Company had been made to understand this

position.⁴ And Bentinck is said to have gone to the extent of offering the Mutee Musjid and the Tajmahal for sale to save his budget ;⁵ he could hardly have under-estimated the threat of losing 50 lakhs and much more a year.⁶

Knowledgeable people will probably look askance at this submission of ours. They will remember that the Calcutta Supreme Court had no jurisdiction outside the limits of the Mahratta Ditches. Its verdict was not binding outside those limits. True no doubt. But then there was something besides.

There was then hardly any village in British India which had not heard of the Burma War and of the Barrackpur and the Bharatpur risings of 1824-25, or of the eventual victory scored in all the sectors by the British Might. It was the Government's business to make this gospel spread all over the country. On the other hand, according to Amherst, Heber, Malcolm, Metcalfe, Mugmoodvre and many others, India of those days had a host of "unseen hands" which spread all over the country the intelligence of any thing inconveniencing the Raj ; when there was no such intelligence, they even fabricated them for their broadcasts. When 'these partisan purveyors of malignant reports' found that Calcutta had openly challenged the authority of the Governor General, the local representative of that all conquering British Might,—it must have looked like a God-send to them. That they made good use of this opportunity is evidenced by the reports published in several contemporary papers including the anti-agitation *Asiatic Journal*.⁷

What India's millions felt in August-September 1828, when they got the story of the discomfiture of the Governor General, in its rumour magnified size and shape, can be easily imagined. But were India's millions actually getting this and earlier stories and learning that the Government was asking for taxes but not daring to "enforce it for fear of exciting insurrections" ?⁸ According to contemporary

assessments, they were. (Later assessments differ. Those are based on the premises,—such evidences are found in English language broadcasts only; those could not have got more than a few hundred of native readers. And the invariable conclusion is: It is ridiculous to assume that English language broadcasts could have made any impact on India's millions. The reasoning is flawless. But the start is wrong. We are no doubt using in this study English language evidences only, but those were not employed to carry the message to India's millions; those were for the benefit of the English reading public. And it was repeatedly stated that those were based on *native language* akhbars, circulars, proclamations, 'innumerable private letters' and on rumours circulating in the country. And there is not a single contemporary statement to the effect that the claim of widespread interest or excitement was a false rumour).⁸ⁱ

What Lord Bentinck and his advisers were then getting are also relevant to our study. They read, for example :

"How it [the agitation] will end at last, it is impossible to say; but if the Natives are resolute in holding out, it [the Tax Regulation] must be repealed; for the commerce of Calcutta cannot be carried on without them; in fact, it is with their capital entirely that it is supported."⁹

Will the Natives hold out?—they must have asked. And they got that the moneyed people at Benares

"have entered into a sort of combination to oppose the law by agreeing [not only not to pay the new tax, but] not to accept stamped [i. e., tax-paid] hoondies"¹⁰

And they got that the Marwari Shroffs at Calcutta had formally resolved, should the tax regulation be not withdrawn or suspended, to

"discontinue transacting business, close our houses and leave this city."¹¹

And they heard: "The view which the native community of Calcutta have taken of the Stamp Tax is very decisively shown by the ... proceedings ... of Marwari Shroffs, merchants" quoted above.¹² They also got that the moneyed

people were not taking interest in the various loans floated by the Government and were even refusing to accept promissory notes,—the paper money,—issued by the banks.¹³

The authorities probably tried to derive comfort from considerations that what the newspapers were broadcasting were just words or little more than pious wishes. But they must have been told by their Accounts Department that the loans floated by them were really not finding subscribers. And that was happening at a time when, due to the war expenditure of the immediately preceding years, there was plenty of liquid cash in people's hands. Very telling is the fact that at a time when the Government had secured victories and there was no chance of their losing their hold, the authorities had to raise interest on their loans (and even those failed to attract investors.)¹⁴

Living in the midst of widespread rumours as above, nobody in the Administration could then believe that it would be possible to get any substantial yield from the mofussil tax without having to take recourse to widespread repressive measures,—which meant additional outlay, which meant perhaps larger deficit in spite of larger income, which meant stronger censures from the superior authorities in London.¹⁵

And that was not all. Only months before the Indian Administration's mouthpiece *John Bull* had written, more in anguish than in anger,—that the 'clamour and outcry' raised in London "seem to have intimidated them [the Court of Directors]", that they appear to have become extraordinarily liberal,

"from fear of the radical faction at home or from a wish to rally this faction around the renewal of the Charter."¹⁶

The set up in Calcutta could hardly expect any succour from London.

And that again was not all. About the same time they started getting frightening news from the Bombay side, of the quarrel between the Governor and the Supreme Court ; of the Commander-in-Chief contemplating

"lending him [the Chief Justice] military assistance to enforce the authority of his tip staves and writs of attachment" ;¹⁷

of the Governor making up

"his mind in that event to seize the person of the Commander-in-Chief and deport him from India."¹⁸

In the cold months of 1828-29 Lord Bentinck had before him the judgement of the Calcutta Supreme Court, the news of the country being excited thereby, the story of the triangular confrontation taking shape in Bombay, the *John Bull* type lamentations of the local supporters of his administration, the realization that his London superiors were perhaps not in a position to help him but certainly in a mood to come heavy upon him if he failed to cut down expenses and produce a balanced budget, and his administration's report that on the passing of the Calcutta Stamp (Duties) Regulation, with its theoretical expectation of bringing in 6 lakhs a year over and above the 47 lakhs from the Mofussil tax, the total receipts in 1828 had actually recorded a decline.¹⁹

It was in a situation like this that Lord William Cavendish Bentinck decided to invite suggestions "to amend any defects in the existing establishments" from

"all native Gentlemen, Landholders, Merchants and others" and "all Europeans, including the Indigo planters."²⁰

This move has been used to prove the liberality of Bentinck's political thinking.²¹ When we remember that the group addressed was not a neutral group but one which had been, during the preceding 24 months, raising political demands to the extent of 'No taxation without representation'; hurling abuse after abuse on the Governor General in Council, the Court of Directors, the Board of Control; and threatening to go out of the Empire,—a more correct assessment seems to be capitulation on the part of the Governor General.

It was against this capitulation, or if we prefer, this liberalization of British attitude towards India under the

pressure of direct action, and the various implicit and explicit commitments made to the agitators thereafter, that we have to appraise the dying outburst of Governor Sir John Malcolm :

"We must not yield or give up a single point, ... Such was our condition that not the *honour* but the *power* of the nation must be vindicated."¹

When an Englishman talks of vindicating not the *honour* but the *power* of England, it means that something awful had happened. Considered from Malcolm's standpoint, what had happened in India in 1829 was really awful.

Here ends the first part of our submission. In the second we shall take up for discussion how England vindicated not her honour but her power, — in the Bentinck years, by superior statesmanship ; and, thereafter, by blacking out Lord Amherst's hopes, fears and travails.

CHAPTER 17

NOTES AND REFERENCES

Ch. 1 : INTRODUCTION

Several additional evidences have come to our knowledge after this opening chapter was put in print. Of these, one is an assessment made in 1819 by Governor Elphinstone. "Our Empire in India", said he," would probably stand for a long time unless chance should raise some false prophet who should unite a plan for the reformation of the existing religion with one for the deliverance of the country from foreigners. Against such a storm as an able and enthusiastic man might raise by these means, I do not think our power could stand one moment, and this is exactly what attempts at conversion are likely to produce—the destruction of our Eastern Empire."—Letter 10. 1. 1819 to Capt. Irvine, quoted in K. Ballhatchet, *Social Policy and Social Change in Western India (1817-1830)*, referred to later as *Ballhatchet : Social change*, pp. 248-9.—Not long after a religious reformer, Rammohun Roy, was found interested in political activities.

The second is the account of a Supreme Court trial of an act of civil disobedience, in which the right and power of the Governor General to levy tax was challenged.

The third is that in 1928 Brajendranath Banerji, Ramnanda Chatterji and Amal Home planned to publish a Government report on the political atmosphere obtaining here in the early 1820s, viz., Secretary W. B. Bayley's Minute of 10. 10. 1822. They were permitted to publish only the portions approved by the Government of the time, though the said report was not covered even by the 'Hundred Years Rule'.—*Modern Review*, Oct. 1928, p. 487 ; Text in Nov. 1928 issue.

Other later finds have been referred to under the notes for the relevant chapters.

1 Sir John Malcolm, EIC Debate 18. 12. 1826. The same was the consensus in March 1828 when the discussion centred round an act of civil disobedience, EIC Debate, 19. 3. 1828.—*Oriental Herald*, Jan. 1827, p. 180 ; *Asiatic Journal*, April 1828, p. 577.

2 *Modern Review*, Oct., Nov. 1928.

3 Pamphlet, 1821-22 ; reproduced in *Calcutta Journal*, 1822, Vol. I, pp. 185—.

4 Note 2 above.

5 *Oriental Herald*, April-June 1827, pp. 188-199.

6 C. H. Philips, *The East India Company 1784—1834*, p. 256.—

"On both these points [want of conveyance and firing on the British troops] Wynn must either have been misinformed [by Governor General Amherst] or he deliberately lied."

7 *Asiatic Journal*, August 1824.

8 *Asiatic Journal*, *Oriental Herald*, 1826-28.

9 See Note below.

10 EIC Debate, 19. 3. 1828,—*Asiatic Journal*, April 1828, p. 577

National Library of India, Calcutta has complete files of *Asiatic Journal* and *Oriental Herald* of the relevant period, and several volumes of *Bengal Chronicle* and *Bengal Hurkaru*. No issue of *Calcutta Chronicle* is locally available ; our references are to reproductions in *Bengal Chronicle*, *Bengal Hurkaru* and *Oriental Herald*.

Ch. 2 : "ALL INDIA LOOKING OUT FOR OUR DOWNFALL"

Of our later finds, one is an account of atrocities committed by the British army during their acquisitions of the Mahratta territories in 1815-18. The second is an account of their similar exploits in Burma in 1824-25. Places of worship were ransacked, images of gods were broken open,

to satisfy the treasure hunger of the victorious soldiers. In the Mahratta lands they acted as a successful imitator of Nadir Shah in Delhi, the European half of the soldiers taking the leading part. One of the accounts has: "The enormities committed by the Europeans and natives in this town (Trimbak) on the date of their arrival here exceeded anything. The property, the very food & clothings & the household goods were carried off, the temples polluted, and some go so far as to say the women suffered the same abomination; but certain it is they were stript and lying naked in the streets. ... There is no discipline at all in it, among the Europeans particularly, and I am sorry to say that many of the officers are as notorious for their depredations as the men" —Briggs to Elphinstone, letter 25. 4. 1818, (The Mountstuart papers) quoted in Kenneth Ballhatchet, *Social Policy and Social change in Western India 1817-1830*, p. 27.

The third of our later finds is a law, albeit unwritten, under which no Indian was allowed to wear shoes while in the presence of 'European Gentlemen'.—*Calcutta Monthly Journal*, Jan. 1830, p. 126; the Eden sisters' (Lord Auckland's sisters) letters; J. B. Gilchrist, *E. I. Guide and Vade Mecum*; our article 'Rammohun Roy and his shoes', *Indian Messenger*, 7. 7. 1978.

The fourth is another similar law, under which "every native of whatever rank got out of his palkee or vehicle or off his horse when a sahib passed by, salaamed, and with his hands placed in a modest contact and his eyes turned down while his head inclined in humility, waited, till the white man had passed. The arrival of the Supreme Court [in 1774] stopped it finally" [so far as the city area bounded by the Mahratta Ditches was concerned; the rest of the country had this 'law' in force till at least the time of Lord Bentinck.] The quote is from Col. James Young's letter 20. 4. 1834 to Lord Bentinck,—Prof. C. H. Philips, *The Correspondence of Lord Bentinck, 1828-35*, p. 1246.

- 1 Indian Memorial against the 1823 Press Regulation, to the Calcutta Supreme Court, 31. 8. 1828 Rammohun Roy, *English Works*, Nag-Burman ed. (Later referred to as *Rm? Works*), Pt. IV, pp. 4,5.
- 2 Victor Jacquemont, *Voyage dans l'Inde*, *Modern Review*, June 1925, (Later referred to as *Jacquemont-Voyage*). pp. 689-92.
- 3 Sir John Malcolm, Dr. B. C. Majumdar, *An Advanced History of India*, 1958 ed. (Later referred to as *R?M-Adv. History*). p. 724.
- 4 Dr. B. C. Majumdar, in *ROM-Adv. History*, p. 724.
- 5 *The Private Journal of the Marquis of Hastings, 1813-18*, (Later referred to as *Hastings Journal*), entry dated 15. 4. 1816.
- 6 *ibid.*
- 7 H. T. Prinsep, *History of the Military and Political Transactions in India ... 1813-1823*, quoted in *R?M-Adv. History*, p. 725.
- 8 *Asiatic Journal*, May 1824, pp. 569, 570.
- 9 *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, Nov. 1824, p. 364.
- 10 *Asiatic Journal*, Jan.-June 1824; C. H. Philips, *The East India Company*, pp. 295-8.
- 11 Bishop Reginald Heber, *A Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India .. 1824-1825*. (Later referred to as *Heber : Narrative*).
- 12 Calcutta letters published in London papers, quoted in *Oriental Herald*, Sept.-Dec. 1824; Board of Control President Wyndham, Letter to Prime Minister Liverpool, 16. 11. 1824, quoted in C. H. Philips, *The East India Company*, p. 255.
- 13 G. D. Beames, *British Attitudes towards India 1784-1858*, p. 60.
- 14 *John Bull*, 15. 9. 1829, quoted in Dr. J. Rosselli, *Lord William Bentinck*, pp. 246-7.
- 15 *Oriental Herald*, Sept. 1824, p. 180.
- 16 Heber : *Narrative*, Correspondence, letter to the Dean of St. Asaph, 27. 1. 1824, p. 270.
- 17 C. W. Metcalfe, letter to Lord Amherst, 8. 6. 1824, quoted in B. D. Basu, *The Rise of Christian Power in India*.
- 18 T. B. Macaulay, early 1830s, quoted in Dr. Rosselli, *Lord William Bentinck*, p. 182.
- 19 John Malcolm, later Governor of Bombay, *BIC Debate* 9. 7 1824, *Asiatic Journal*, Aug. 1824. p. 201, *Oriental Herald*, Sept. 1824, p. 10.
- 20 William Adam, *Reports on the State of Native Education, 1835-38*.
- 21 Indian Memorial against the 1823 Press Regulation mid-1828, to the King in Council, para 48rd.
- 22 *Jacquemont Voyage*, see 2 above.
- 23 David Thomson, *Europe since Napoleon*, p. 186.
- 24 *Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany*, Sept. 1828, quoted in Collet : Rammohun Roy, Prof. Dilip Kumar Biswas and Prabhat Chandra Ganguli 1962 ed., p. 182.
- 25 *ibid.*

26 Proclamations to the Arakanese, *Oriental Herald*, Sept.-Dec. 1824, p. 480. "A proclamation [Wilson documents p. 35] was issued by the British officers asking the Assamese to co-operate with them and assuring them that the British would re-establish in Assam a government adapted to their wants and calculated to promote the happiness of all classes."—Dr. A. C. Banerji, *The Eastern Frontier*, p. 881. Also, *ibid.*, pp. 875-876.

27 Rammohun Roy, letter to Prasanna Kumar Tagore, published in the *Reformer*, January (?) 1888,—Dr. J. K. Majumdar, *Rammohun Roy and the Progressive Movements*, p. 898.

28 "The same man" is Rammohun Roy. See notes 27 and 2 above.

Ch. 3 : A HOUSE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF

Of the later finds, one is that during the period, when Indians were turning passionately pro-Napoleon (*vide* John Digby's note about Rammohun Roy, in S. D. Collet : *Rammohun Roy*, 1962 ed, p. 24), a large number of people in England itself were praying that Revolutionary France would come and conquer England and 'liberate them'. We have got : "On December 13th [1792] Lord Grenville, the Foreign Secretary, told the House of Lords that ... Five associations, at the head of which was the London Corresponding Society, in a joint address voted by 5,000 peoples, represented the English as nearly reduced by an oppressive system and gradual encroachments to that abject slavery from which the French are already free and Britons are preparing to become so." "At a large meeting ... in July 1795 ... resolutions were passed demanding [political rights] ... Three months later a crowd estimated at 1,50,000 assembled in Copenhagen Fields, Marylebone, to demand the Parliamentary reform, the dismissal of the ministers and the cessation of hostilities [against France]." —Charles Petrie, *Lord Liverpool and his times*, pp. 37, 39, 40. When Napoleon was finally defeated in 1815, some people in England wore black badges of mourning.

A Mistake, p. 20, 28th line,—for “trebled soon after” read “increased by ten thousand”.

1 Elie Halevy, *The Liberal Awakening 1815-1830*, *passim*.

2 M. Dorothy George, *English Political Caricature 1793-1832*, p. 183.

3 *ibid*, pp. 183, 185.

4 Lt. Col. Fitzclarence, Aide-de-Camp, Lord Moira-Hastings, 1816-17, *Journal of a Route Across India ... 1817-18*, entry under “Nagpur 1818, 5 Jan.”

5 See Chapter 2, note 21.

6 Rammohun Roy, letter 18. 8. 1826, to J. Crawford, one of the emissaries sent by Calcutta to London in connection with its political demands. *RmRoy Works*, Pt. IV, p. 108.

7 *Oriental Herald*, Sept 1824, p. 111.

8 *British Parliamentary Papers, East India Company Affairs, Colonies*, 1831-32, 5, Evidence, James Sutherland, 16. 8. 1832.

9 Rammohun Roy, letter 20. 12. 1831 to Hyde Villiers, *RmR Works*, Pt. IV, p. 126.

10 S. D. Collet, *Raja Rammohun Roy*, *passim*.

11 James Silk Buckingham, *Calcutta Journal*. 24. 4. 1822, p. 583.

12 *Asiatic Journal*, July-Dec., 1822, pp. 671—.

13 *ibid*.

14 Monte D'Rozario, letter 9. 12. 1826, to Government, requesting withdrawal of the order cancelling the licence of his paper; James Sutherland, letter 9. 12. 1826, to Government, in connection with the same.—*Oriental Herald*, June, 1827, pp. 584-9.

15 *Lords Committee Report 1852-53*, Evidence, H. H. Wilson. He was testifying on the basis of his pre-1832 (1820?) experience.

16 England abolished Slave Trade in 1807, and Slavery itself in 1833, chiefly under the influence of William Wilberforce. Unfortunately, as the group headed by Wilberforce was interested in christianising India, (which was not liked either by the EIC or the Indian people,) it was presented to India as a villain and was readily accepted by her as such.

Ch. 4 : “YOUR EUROPEAN TYRANTS ARE FEW IN NUMBER, MURDER THEM”

Of the subsequent finds, one is a sentence in a letter of Rammohun Roy. The source, the parent letter, is well

known ; it has gone into history as his 'autobiographical letter'. But the sentence in question, though startling and of vital importance, has, till now, attracted nobody's comment. According to this sentence, as early as 1788-90 Rammohun harboured "a feeling of great aversion to the establishment of the British power in India" and he left home in his 16th year with that 'feeling of great aversion'.

How long did this 'great aversion' last ? We do not know for certain. But we know that he remained passionately pro-Napoleon even when it was known that Napoleon was determined to crush England and to make her give up all her colonies ; that he turned anti-Napoleon only after his defeat in 1815,—*vide* John Digby's note of 1817 quoted in S. D. Collet : *Rammohun Roy*, 1962 ed., p. 24.

Another is a sentence in Rammohun Roy's *Brief remarks regarding modern encroachments on the ancient rights of females*, 1821-22. The booklet is well known ; but never before has it been noticed that Rammohun wrote it to "enable the public to form an idea of the state of ... Hindustan in ancient days [when India was not arbitrarily ruled] and of the subsequent gradual degradation introduced into its social and *political* constitution by *arbitrary* authorities." He specifically stated that it was with this purpose that "I am induced to give as an *instance* the interest and care which our ancient legislators took in the promotion of the comfort of the female part of the community ..." Is it an accident that whenever Rammohun is found talking about his aversion to British rule (with which he roamed in wilderness in his early youth) or about his aversion to arbitrary rule (with which he cited the case of the treatment of women in his matured manhood), —is it an accident that we somehow manage to put that *aversion* in the shade by turning the story upside down, by saying that he was then interested in religious investigations (Dr. Lant Carpenter's submission) or that he was then interested in the rights of women (everybody's submission) ?

Both religious investigation and upholding women's rights are undoubtedly eminently laudable things, but Rammohun said that, on both occasions, he had been acting under other persuasions.

The third is an appeal made by Rammohun Roy in the last number of his paper, the *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* (which announced the discontinuance of the paper), to the "kind and liberal gentlemen of Persia ... who have honoured the *Mirat-ool-Ukhbar* with their patronage", to "excuse the non-fulfilment of my promise to make them acquainted with passing events as stated in the introductory remarks in the first Number", and "always consider me the humblest of the human race as devoted to their service." What could he have been talking about? We have seen the contents of more than twenty issues of his paper as reproduced in various English language periodicals of the time. There is nothing in them which might have been of any service to any of the "kind and liberal gentlemen of Persia". Can it be that the *Mirat* was circulating something outside what was being shown in the English translations; or, was he making use of his paper to send with its issues something else?

Another later find is that some of the leaders of the 1820s, e.g., Rammohun Roy, developed to a remarkable extent what in today's parlance is called 'grass root'. The pointers are as follows.

In his early youth Rammohun spent about 4 years, travelling and living in "different countries, chiefly within, but some beyond, the bounds of Hindoostan." (—His autobiographical letter cited earlier.) Towards the end of the 1790s he was again on the road, taking this time in his stride, "Patna, Benares and other far away places of Northern India". He spent some time in Benares in 1796 also.—(B. N. Banerjee, *Rammohun Roy*, in Bengali, *Sahitya Sadhak Charitamala* series.) The next 15 years of his life he passed in Dacca-Jalalpur (Faridpur), Murshidabad,

Ramgarh, Bhagalpur, Rangpur, Bhutan and Calcutta. (—Collet, *Life of Rammohun Roy*.)

During the years 1814-30, stationed in Calcutta, he maintained contact with, and interest in, the other parts of the country, by letters as well as by personal visits. In 1815, 1820 we find him publishing Hindi translations of his books for circulation in Hindi speaking areas. In 1822-23 he is seen running his Persian language paper, the *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*, reaching through it "many and distant parts of India" including the Bombay region. (See pp. 36-39, 112-114.) In 1822 we find him, besides, collecting materials for his Political Memorial "from friends in Upper Provinces". (—His letter to Sir John Bowring, *Works*, Pt. IV, p. 113.) Some time during this period he had the opportunity of observing the people of North, East, West and South India, as seen below.

In his Evidence before the Parliamentary Committee, Rammohun said that he was giving his views based on "a careful survey and observations of the people and inhabitants of the various parts of the country and in every condition of life", including specifically "the peasants or villagers who reside at a distance from large towns."

Rammohun has used the expression "I have ... often observed", and he has encompassed in his observations the people of Bengal, of the Western and the Northern Provinces, and of the 'Dakhan' (the Deccan). And his observations were very close. "In Bengal", said he, "they live most commonly on rice with a few vegetables, salt, hot spices and fish. I have however often observed, the poorer classes living on rice and salt only." "In the Upper Provinces", he found, "they use wheaten flour instead of rice, and the poorer classes frequently use bajra (millet) &c.; the Mohammedans in all parts, who can afford it, add fowl and other animal food. A full grown person in Bengal consumes about 1 lb. to 1½ lb. of rice a day; in the Upper Provinces a larger quantity of wheaten flour, even

though so much more nourishing. The Vaishyas (persons of the third class) and the Brahmans of the Dakhan never eat flesh under any circumstances."

As regards their dwelling place, he observed that, "In higher Bengal and the Upper and Western Provinces they occupy mud huts ; in the lower and Eastern parts of Bengal generally hovels composed of straw, mats and sticks ; the higher classes only having houses built of brick and lime."

He took notice of their dressing habits also. "The Hindus of the upper provinces wear a turban on the head, a piece of cotton cloth (called a chadar) wrapped round the chest, and another piece girt closely about the loins and falling down towards the knee ; besides they have frequently under the chadar a vest or waistcoat cut and fitted to the person. In the lower provinces they generally go bareheaded ; the lower garment is worn more open but falling down towards the ankle ; and the poorer class of labourers have merely a small strip of cloth girt round their loins for the sake of decency and are in other respects quite naked. The Mohammedans everywhere use the turban and are better clad. The respectable and wealthy classes of people, both Mussalmans and Hindus, are of course dressed in a more respectable and becoming manner."

Rammohun talked about 'late years', when he had practically to thank the evil of cholera ; for the "cholera morbus having greatly reduced the surplus population, the condition of the labourers has since been much improved in comparison with what it was before, the people were thinned by that melancholy scourge."

Rammohun did not merely carry on an 'aerial' survey of his country and of his countrymen ; he appears to have shared with them their hopes and fears and discussed with them their problems. No responsible person could have suggested to the authorities the possibility of raising

a people's militia from amongst the people of the Upper Provinces which, not long before, had risen against the Raj, without having discussed the matter with the people disaffected.

He remarked at one place : "the peasants or villagers ... are as innocent, temperate and moral in their conduct as the people of any country whatsoever ; and the farther I proceed towards the North and West, the greater the honesty, simplicity and independence of character *I meet with*." Could he have meant "meeting those people in some books" ? Here is a pointer. He prefaced his observations with : "I feel great reluctance in offering an opinion on a subject on which I may unfortunately differ from a considerable number of those gentleman" who had by then made public their views. In other words, Rammohun's views were derived from *direct, immediate* observations ; and to talk about "the honesty, simplicity of character", etc. of a people, he had not only to observe them but to communicate with them.

If we keep our study confined to his boulder-strewn translations of the Sastras, he appears not to have had any line of communication with the common people who spoke the patois. But if we transport ourselves to his period, study him as well as his 'keepers' in action (see chapters 5, 6), it appears that not many even in the Gandhian period of India's history could beat him in this respect.

1 *Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females*, 1821-22, *Calcutta Journal*, 1822, I, pp. 185— ; *Oriental Herald*, Aug. 1826.

2 *Asiatic Journal*, Aug. 1824, p. 201.

3 See Chapter 2, note 12.

4 *Morning Herald*, 28. 12. 1825, *Oriental Herald* Jan.-March 1826, p. 300.

5 See Chapters 7-9.

6 See discussion in Dr. S. N. Sen, *Eighteen Fiftyseven*.

7 *Miras-ul Akhbar*, 28. 6. 1822, *Calcutta Journal*, 18. 7. 1822.

That Rammohun Roy's apathy to the Greek struggle for independence was a political stunt, is indicated by his friend William Adam's testimony.

According to Adam, he could "well recollect the fervent good wishes with which he [Rammohun] watched the struggle of Greece against Turkish power."—William Adam, *Lecture on the Life and Labours of Rammohun Roy*, 1977 ed., pp. 13, 14.

8 W. B. Bayley, Report 10. 10. 1822, *Modern Review*, Nov. 1823.

9 See note 1 above. The remark is in the form of an explanatory note to the first sentence on the first page.

10 *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*, No. J, 12. 4. 1822, *Calcutta Journal*, 29. 4. 1822.

11 Several articles appeared originally in the *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*, and were reproduced in the *Calcutta Journal*, 1822.

12i Rammohun Roy, letter 11. 8. 1821, to J. S. Buckingham, *RmR Works*, Pt. IV, p. 89.

12ii Chapter 2, notes 24, 25.

13 Chapter 2, note 17.

14 Rammohun Roy and/or his associates have been by name connected with the indoctrination programme in (i) Abbe J. Dubois, letter 15. 12. 1820; (ii) W. B. Bayley, report 10. 10. 1822; (iii) M. Elphinstone, letter 23. 3. 1822; (iv) Sir John Malcolm, speech 9. 7. 1824; (v) Bishop Daniel Corrie, letters 4. 11. 1830, 30. 4. 1831.

15 *Asiatic Journal*, Aug. 1824, p. 201. Sir John Malcolm might also have been referring to his experience with the Mahratta Brahmins. But his reference to the agitation for a Free Press in this connection indicates that he had Rammohun Roy in view. The Mahratta Brahmins were not then agitating for a Free Press.

Ch. 5 : "A POWERFUL ENGINE AT WORK"

Of the later finds, one is the emergence of the 'scourge' known as the Thugs. They operated over a vast area, from Madras on the south to Delhi on the north and from Bombay on the west to Calcutta on the east; and had a striking strength of tens of thousands,—“more than three thousand thugs” had to be hanged, transported or otherwise punished before “India was... rid of this great scourge.” According to an expert assessment, based on Malcolm's, Sleeman's and various others' testimonies, “These secret assemblages

of criminals had peculiar modes of initiating their members, who, travelling in disguise, murdered helpless travellers, mostly by strangulation with a handkerchief or scarf used as a noose. Although the members were recruited from both Hindus and Muslims, the Thugs were reputed to be devotees of the goddess Kali and carried on their heinous trade of murder on the mistaken belief that it had the sanction of the goddess. The organisation spread almost all over India, and there are reasons to believe that they secured active help from certain chiefs, landholders and merchants." The victims were, in most cases, unwary travellers, and the murders were almost always of the unprovoked kind. —Dr. R. C. Majumdar, *An Advanced History of India*, pp. 825-6.

If men of different religious persuasions and men hailing from different parts of the country comprising hundreds of thousands of square miles could run an all India organisation of this magnitude for committing unprovoked murders, it was at least theoretically feasible to build up a similar body for harassing India's foreign rulers who were then believed to be causing so much hardship to most of the people.

1 Director N. B. Edmonstone, speech, B. I. C. Debate 19. 6. 1922, quoted in Govt. Gaz : 2 Jan. 1928.

2 *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, Aug. 1922, p. 265.

3 See Chapter 2, note 24.

4 *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, 24. 12. 1921.

5 *Asiatic Journal*, Aug. 1924, p. 201.

6 Note 1 above.

7 *Asiatic Journal*, July-December 1922, p. 578.

8 W. B. Bayley, Report 10, 10. 1922, *Modern Review*, Nov. 1928.

9 Chapter 4, note 1.

10 Note 8 above.

11 (i) Abbe J. A. Dubois, *Letters ...*, 1928, p. 165; (ii) Director N. B. Edmonstone, speech, Govt. Gazette, 2. 1. 1928; (iii) Governor M. Elphinstone, letter, Thomson and Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of the British Rule in India*, p. 276; (iv) W.B. Bayley's report, 10. 10. 1922, *Modern Review*, Nov. 1928.

12 Memorial against the 1923 Press Regulation, to the Calcutta Supreme Court, RmRoy Works, Pt. IV, p. 5.

- 13 John Digby, letter 27. 7. 1824, to the Board of Revenue, Chanda and Majumdar, *Letters and Documents*, p. 849.
- 14 *Asiatic Journal*, March 1824, p. 304.
- 15 Christopher Herbert, *George IV, Prince of Wales*, p. 127.
- 17 Chapter 2, note 12.

Ch. 6 : THE REMEDY AND THE RESPONSE

Of the later finds, one is that when certain Calcuttans were indulging in anti-establishment propaganda, they knew that the Government had at its disposal a law (Regulation III of 1818) under which any Indian could be kept in detention until his death, without having to cite any reason, and a law (Regulation IX of 1807) under which any magistrate could order at his discretion public flogging of any Indian. Even the latter was not a dead Act; in the year 1822 itself an Indian gentleman was treated to public flogging and, on release, he committed suicide.—*Vide* Magistrate Hayes' case in the *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* of 3. 5. 1822 and other papers of the time.

Another find is that in the years 1823-27 Bengal newspapers were required not only to refrain from making comments unpleasant to the authorities; they had to make comments positively pleasant to them.—A Calcutta letter published in *Oriental Herald*, Oct. 1825, has: "He who delivers himself in any language save that of admiration as to the measures of our Indian Government puts forth the bantling of his genius with the bow string about his neck."

Buckingham, ordered to leave, left the country. Arnot did not. He fled to Chandannagore, then under the French. He was arrested there and put aboard a ship bound for England. His was perhaps the first political arrest for

defying a government order of Calcutta under the British, and recalls the experience of India's freedom fighters of later times who also fled to Chandannagore and were arrested on French territory.

Buckingham's Indian role is well known. Arnot's is not. He also played an important part in the 1820-23 'indoctrination programme'. It was with him as a political assistant that Rammohun Roy launched his *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* (vide *Calcutta Journal*, 24. 4. 1822). That he was politically important is also indicated by the fact that he was ordered out of India.

1 See notes above.

2i Rammohun Roy's son Radhaprasad's letter, 23. 7. 1828, to Lord Bentinck. For the text of the letter see J. K. Majumdar, *Letters and Documents ... Rammohun Roy*, p. 508.

2ii James Sutherland, *Reminiscences...*, *India Gazette* 1884, reproduced in *Calcutta Review*, October 1935 p. 68.

3 Dwarkanath Tagore, speech at a Calcutta meeting, 5. 1. 1835, *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, Feb. 1835.

4 *Bengal Chronicle*, 20. 10. 1829.

5 The particulars given in this connection are from the proceedings of the case, reproduced in Majumdar, *Letters and Documents ... Rammohun Roy*.

6 See Chapter 11, pp 97-99.

7 *Oriental Herald*, Feb. 1828, p. 226. See also note 2 above.

8 S. D. Collet, *Raja Rammohun Roy*, Biswas and Ganguli ed., p. 52.

9 Governor General Lord Amherst and/or Vice President Lord Combermere; W. B. Bayley, Chief Secretary; Holt Mackenzie, Secretary, Territorial Department; —, the Head of the Board of Revenue. The Government Secretariat, at the highest level, knew that this embezzlement case was being processed in a manner very different from that of other similar cases.

10 Note 2ii above.

11 Rammohun Roy, Memorial against the 1823 Press Regulation, to the King in Council,—*Works*, Pt. IV. pp. 12, 18; Pt. II, p. 189.

12 EIO Debate, 9. 7. 1824 and 23. 7. 1824, *Asiatic Journal and Oriental Herald*, August 1824.

13 *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*, 4. 4. 1828, English translation in *Calcutta Journal*, 10. 4. 1828.

14 Articles in *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*, *Calcutta Journal*, 1822; also Brief remarks regarding modern encroachments on the ancient rights of females, 1821-22.

15 Note 11 above.

16 Rammohun Roy, *Works*, Pt. III, p. 35. Discussed by the authors in *British Bhāratat /ratham Swadhinata Andolan*, Bengali Quarterly Journal *Oitihāsik*, No. 5, pp. 76-7.

17 See Chapters 7-9.

18 *Ibid.* Madras also had Press control, but had no native papers.

19 *Ibid.*

Ch. 7 : A PROPHECY COME TRUE

Of the later finds, one is the existence of valuable information pertinent to this subject in the official records. —*Vide* Dr. G. S. Vashishtha's paper, Apprehension of Anti-British Combination in North India in 1824-25, *Quarterly Review of Historical Studies*, Vol. XVIII 1978-79, No. 1, pp. 43-48. See also in this connection our Note under Chapter 8 below.

Another is in respect of the availability of military transport, as claimed by us on the basis of the Mugmoodvre letter of January (?) 1825, (page 57). President Wynn has now been found to have told the House of Commons on 22. 3. 1827 : "In fact 100 bullocks were actually in the lines of the [47th] regiment, that was allowing ten bullocks to each company." That means, either that the sepoys refused to march in spite of the availability of necessary transport, or that bullock-men denied the army effective cooperation even though in a position to help it.

1 Indian Memorial against the 1828 Press Regulation, to the King in Council, mid 1828, para 31.

2 (a) Governor General's Notification No. 335 of 1824, 4. 11. 1824, reproduced in several Calcutta papers, including the *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, in Nov. 1824.

(b) Capt. Macnaghten's eye-witness report in *Bengal Huskara*, 11. 11. 1824.

(c) Proceedings of Native Court Martials, held in Nov. 1824; Proceedings of debates on the Barrackpur incident in the EIC Court of Proprietors and the British House of Commons,—*Asiatic Journal*, *Oriental Herald*, 1825-28

(d) Letters from India, published in London, in *Asiatic Journal*, May 1824, *Murray's Representative*, 4. 8. 1826, *Oriental Herald*, Sept.-Dec. 1824, April-June 1826.

(e) Bishop Reginald Heber, letters 27. 1. 1824. 29. 9. 1824, 22. 1. 1825, 28. 1. 1825, 10. 5. 1825.—Heber : *Narrative, Correspondence*.

3 Lord Teignmouth, Notes on Indian Affairs, I, p. 169, quoted in Mill & Wilson, *The History of British India*, Vol. IX. p. 165.

4 Bishop Reginald Heber to the Dean of St. Asaph, 27. 1. 1824,—Heber : *Narrative, Correspondence*.

5 Bishop Reginald Heber, letter to Governor General Lord Amherst, 24. 1. 1825.—*Life of Bishop Heber*, Vol. II, p. 275.

6 Heber : *Narrative, Correspondence*, letter 10. 5. 1825.

7 *ibid.*

8 *ibid.*, letter 28. 1. 1825.

9 Note 3 above.

10 See Dr. S. N. Sen, *Eighteen Fiftyseven*, pp. 3-5.

11 Note 2(a) above.

12 Note 2(b) above.

13-15 *ibid.*

16 EIC and House of Commons Debates on the Barrackpur Mutiny,—22. 12. 1826 and 22. 3. 1827 respectively.

17 Court Martial, proceedings, *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, Nov. 1824, p. 386.

18 House of Commons Debate 22. 3. 1827, C. W. W. Wynn's reply, *Oriental Herald*, April-June 1827, p. 188.

19 *Oriental Herald*, Jan. 1826, p. 181.

20 Note 18 above.

21 Jogunnouth Mugmoodvre, letter January (?) 1825, to President of the Board of Control, C. W. W. Wynn, *Oriental Herald*, October 1825, pp. 188-92. See also Wynn's admission in Notes above.

22 Fort William Notifications, (reproduced in *Calcutta Monthly Journal* and other papers) for the year 1825.

23 Bishop Reginald Heber, letter 24. 1. 1825, to Governor General Amherst, *Life of Bishop Heber*, Vol. II, p. 275.

24 Note 18 above.

25 EIC Debate, 18. 12. 1826, *Oriental Herald*, Jan. 1827, p. 155. (A mistake,—the speaker, Lushington, was not Secretary Lushington of the Bengal Government.)

Ch. 8 : GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Of the many beliefs on which the British Empire in India rested in its time, one is that after 1818 "There was no Indian power which could question the authority of the British power or raise their voice or hands against it." This belief still runs strong, even though the British Empire in India is now a thing of the past. Even today we introduce assessments like the above with "After 1818, it has *rightly* been said...",—*vide* Dr. Vashishtha in the *Quarterly Review of Historical Studies*, Vol. XVIII, 1978-79, No. 1, p. 47.

What is overlooked is that even while the Third Mahratta War of 1815-18 was turning in favour of the British, Burma was acquiring the status of an Indian power by conquering Assam and other adjacent states in India, and that soon after the conclusion of the Third Mahratta War, Burma did more than "question the authority of the British power"; she demanded the surrender of its past (Murshidabad) and present (Calcutta) capitals. And to resist that demand, the British had to make a war which cost them 20,000 lives. That was on the East. On the West, it was in the post-1818 years that Ranjeet Singh was at the zenith of his power and had a striking force of about 100,000 soldiers. And this power, even *sans* Ranjeet Singh, gave the British a strong enough knock at a time when the British side had become more formidable than it was in the mid-1820s.

In our study we have given preference, over Dr. R. C. Mujumdar's 1953 assessment, cited by Dr. Vashishtha, to Sir C. E. Metcalfe's 1826 assessment, that also cited by him.—"Their apprehensions," *rightly* observed Metcalfe just two days before the fall of Bharatpur, "make the defence of Bharatpur a common cause to other states; and so strong is this impression of the existence of an universal interest in its fate that the natives generally believe that among the

defenders of the fortress are troops secretly supplied by the Courts of Alwar, Jaypoor, Jodhpur and Kurowleo."—Metcalf to Swinton, 16.1.1826.) After the fall of Bharatpur, Indian Durbars, almost in a chorus, highlighted their "desire to evince loyalty and attachment" to the British. From a survey of...[these] reports of Agents in Indian Durbars", it is unsafe to conclude that "an apprehension of anti-British combination of Indian powers was purely imaginary." For, had the Bharatpur Fortress withstood the British attack, Indian Durbars, in a chorus, would have exhibited contrary reaction. That is what Metcalfes appear to have been afraid of.

Of the later finds, one is that when the Anglo-Burma War showed signs of going against the British, some of the natives (we do not know their number) got so excited with hopes of deliverance from British domination that they started holding bonfires. We get from the 20. 8. 1825 issue of the *Oriental Herald*, *Bombay Courier*, quoted in *Asiatic Journal*, April 1826, "It will surprise these optimists to hear that in our Eastern territories since the disaster of our troops at Ramoo, monthly bonfires celebrate this event as the signal of the downfall of the British power."

1 *Asiatic Journal*, Aug. 1824, p. 201.

2 Sir O. E. Metcalfe, see Chapter 2, note 17.

3 Letter 26. 9. 1825, *Murray's Representative*. 4. 3. 1826, *Oriental Herald*, April 1826, p. 126.

4 Governor General in Council, letter September 1824, to Court of Directors, *Wilson Document* No. 12, quoted in Dr. A. C. Banerjee, *Eastern Frontier*, pp. 292-8.

5 Chapter 2, note 17 ; same, note 19 ; Bishop Heber, letter 10. 5. 1825, *Narrative*.

6 Note 8 above.

7 Calcutta letters summarised in *Oriental Herald*, February—June 1826 ; also in *Asiatic Journal*, April 1826.

8 *Oriental Herald*, March 1826.

9 Chapter 1, note 1.

10 This quote is from Sir John Malcolm's dying outburst on 15. 4. 1833, —*El : Debates* 1833, p. 13. He expressed similar views earlier also.

11 Note 8 above.

Ch. 9 : ALL WAS LOST SAVE HONOUR

Of the later finds, one is from Director Edmonstone, Participating in the 28. 2. 1825 E I C Debate on the Barrackpur Mutiny, he once remarked that the propaganda carried on in Indian papers had played a part in causing the said mutiny. He was challenged on this point, which he met with : "He did not say that the late melancholy occurrence of the mutiny in India was the consequence of that temporary freedom of the press [1818—23] ; but he did assert that the licentiousness of the press had a tendency to produce insubordination in India and *actually* had produced it.... He was satisfied that the establishment of the unlimited freedom of the press in India would be the first step towards the ruin of our empire."—*Asiatic Journal*, May 1825, p.739.

1 Chapter 7, note 8.

2 Memorial against 1823 Press Regulation to the Calcutta Supreme Court,—signatories, 6 Hindus. The one left out of the 7 mentioned in the Text is Jogunnouth Mugmoodvre, who appears to have been Rammohun Roy writing under an assumed name to get his communication to London through the vigilance of the Local Government. For the Eurasian and European names we are indebted to punitive orders served on them by the Local Government on 11. 8. 1826, 8/9. 12. 1826 and 31. 5. 1827 and to comments thereon published in the *Asiatic Journal*, the *Bengal Chronicle*, the *John Bull* etc

3 Chapters 4 and 5.

4 Chapter 1, note 4.

5 Chapter 7, note 8.

6 Rammohun Roy, "Additional Queries...", Note 28. 9. 1831, *Works*, Pt. III, pp. 71. 72.

7 EIC Court of Directors and House of Commons Debates on the Barrackpore Mutiny, as reported in various London papers, e.g., the *Asiatic Journal*, *Oriental Herald* ; also articles, comments in the *Oriental Herald*.—1825-28.

8 Jogunnouth Mugmoodvre, letter January (?) 1825 to President of the Board of Control, C. W. W. Wynn, reproduced in *Oriental Herald*, Oct.-Dec. 1825, pp. 188-92.

9 In his Memorial against the 1823 Press Regulation to the Calcutta

Supreme Court, Rammohun Roy tried to prove the loyalty of the Indian people to the British Raj by pointing out that they bought Government Bonds,—“voluntarily entrusted Government with millions of their wealth...”

10 EIO Debate, 21. 12. 1825. *Asiatic Journal*, Jan. 1826, p. 118.

11 For Peterloo Massacre see Elie Halevy, *The Liberal Awakening 1815—1830*; for Barrackpore Massacre see EIO Debates referred to in Note 10.

12 See Chapter 6. Some time in early 1827 Prosecutor Molony moved the Governor General in Council to re-open the case against Rammohun Roy's son Radhuprasad.—Majumdar, *Letters and Documents... Rammohun Roy*, referred to in Chapter 6.

13 Dr. Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, *On Rammohun Roy* 1972, p. 47.

Ch. 10 : OUT OF THE ASHES

Of the later finds, one is of a negative nature, to the effect that in the 1820s India experienced no movement of the kind suggested by us. A Bengal historian of international repute told us once: “India was then governed from two centres, London and Calcutta, in consultation with each other; and the consultation was always made on paper. Relate your findings to those consultations, and fear none. Failing that, better keep your mouth shut.”

As advised, we tried to relate our findings to those consultations, and discovered to our utter discomfiture that there is no reference at all in the entire Amherst period correspondence to any movement of the kind suggested by us. Fortunately, however, we made another discovery,—it is a myth that whatever the British power then did in India got recorded in some great book of consultation, some *Bible* or *Mahabharat*. Irrespective of whether or not India had experienced any political movement in the Amherst period, (a) Secretary Bayley did report in 1822 that Rammohun Roys had been carrying on subversive propaganda; (b) Director

Edmonstone did tell his brother Directors in the same year that there was growing up in India a powerful engine which aimed at the overthrow of the British power ; (c) when a mutiny occurring in 1824 was suppressed, somebody with a native name (Jogunnouth Mugmoodvre) did publicly call the sitting Governor General a liar and a tyrant, and proposed that all Governors General be divested of their law making powers ; (d) Buckingham did circulate in England that ryots, zemindars and merchants in India had vowed to disobey the tax laws. Nobody can deny that these reports and broadcasts were politically significant. Nobody has so far found any reference to them in the London-Calcutta correspondence of the period. This discovery, albeit negative, has emboldened us to publish our chronicle of events, even though the Bible of London-Calcutta correspondence, public or private, of the concerned period has no entry about any of those events or of their impact. See also Notes under chapter 16.

A mistake. On page 77, 17th and 20th lines,—for '1807' read '1805'.

1 Lt. R. A. Maonaghten, *Bengal Hurkaru*, 11. 11, 1824, reproduced in various Calcutta papers, e.g., the *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, Nov. 1824.

2 House of Commons Debate on the Barraekpur Mutiny, 22. 8. 1827, *Oriental Herald*, April 1827, pp. 183-6 ; also *Asiatic Journal* of the same month.

3 S. D. Collet, *Raja Rammohun Roy*, Biswas and Ganguli, 1962 ed., p. 177.

4 *ibid.* pp 172, 173.

5 House of Commons Debate, note 2 above.

6 *Oriental Herald*, Feb. 1826, p. 264

7 Indian agitation against the Jury Act 1826,—see S. D. Collet, *Rammohun Roy...*, 1962 ed., pp. 266-9.

8 The license to *Calcutta Journal*, granted on 18.4.1823, was revoked on 6. 11. 1823,—Govt. letter of that date to J. F. Sandys, J. Palmer, etc.,—*Asiatic Journal*, May 1824, pp. 567-9.

9 It ceased publication soon after 10. 1. 1826.

10 E I O Debates, 9. 7. 1824 and 23. 7. 1824, *Asiatic Journal*, August 1824.

11 *Oriental Herald*, Oct.-Dec. 1825, pp. 188-92.

Ch. 11: BEFORE THE SECOND PLUNGE

Of the later finds, one is the evidence showing that the Indian move was in contact with its counterpart in Ireland,—We get from *John Bull* 26. 8. 1830, that prior to his departure for England Rammohun Roy and his friends had formed a Committee in India to enlarge the funds of the O'Connell Testimonial Fund set up in Dublin on 13 May, 1829.

On page 86 we have written: "There is no categorical admission to the effect that India ever made political use of this [hand-written circular type] media". One of our later finds is a categorical contemporary admission to that effect,—in *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, Nov. 1831, pp. 215, 216.

1 Bombay reported in December 1825 that Ranjeet Singh was "moving with 70,000 men towards Bhurtpore to assist the rebel party".—*Oriental Herald*, June 1826, p. 568. The same city reported around March 1826 that Ranjeet Singh was sending congratulations to Sir C. E. Metcalfe on the British success at Bharatpur.—*Oriental Herald*, Nov. 1826, p. 592.

2 An 1807 letter of the Court of Directors, under which the Government is "precluded from sanctioning any general meeting of the Inhabitants of Calcutta having for its object the discussion of topics of" a political nature.—Sheriff's letter, 12. 5. 1827, *Bengal Chronicle*, 16. 5. 1827, p. 733.

3 Only the Presidency Towns had the protection of the *Habeas Corpus*.

4 See Anti-Jury Act petitions, 1828.

5 The Stamp (Duties) Regulation of Dec. 1826 was approved by London about 6 months earlier, i. e. around May-June 1826. The Indian Jury Act was passed by London on 5. 5. 1826.

6 *London Missionary Register*, Sept. 1816, pp. 370-1.

7 The Trust Deed of the Brahmo Samaj, quoted in S. D. Collet, *Raja Rammohun Roy*..., 1962 ed., pp. 468-77. Cf. in this connection, Rammohun Roy's *A Second Defence of the Monotheistical System of the Vedas*, 1817, *Works*, Pt. II, pp. 109, 110.

8 Cf. Radhakanta Deb's attitude at the time of the formation of the Hindu College Committees.

9 See sub-section 'Organization' in Chapter 13.

10 Objections to Rammohun Roy's activities were raised by the orthodox amongst the Hindus after December 1829, i. e., after he had lent his support

to the Anti-Suttee Regulation of 4. 12 1829. And even then his Brahmo Samaj programme was not attacked.

11 The Christian/European Jurors said in a formal request made to the Chief Justice of the Calcutta Supreme Court: "They feel deeply impressed with the conviction that the maintenance of distinction, which brand a whole race or class of men with moral degradation, is most certainly calculated to confirm that very debasement which was the ostensible ground of establishing such exclusive restrictions in the first instance." "The Grand Jury feel persuaded that if the Legislature were merely to declare the admissibility of Natives to serve on all Juries, such a means alone would be productive of highly beneficial consequences."—*Calcutta Monthly Journal*, Dec. 1827.

12 The Part II of our submission, tentatively called THE BENTINOK STRATEGY, is expected to be out in 1980.

13 *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, 1817, pp. 250-1.

14 The Mcfussel Stamp (Duties) Regulation was passed following the declaration of war against Burma in March 1824.

15 Lords Committee Report 1852-53, Evidences, C. E. Trevelyan, 23. 6. 1853, pp. 170-1.

16 *Oriental Herald*, Feb. 1827, p. 201.

17 Calcutta letter (?) in *Oriental Herald*, Nov. 1827, p. 364.

18 See pages 48-45 ante.

19 *Columbian Press Gazette*, 10. 1. 1826, *Oriental Herald*, Sept. 1826, p. 565.

20 House of Commons Debate, 22. 8. 1827, Sir Charles Forbes,—*Oriental Herald*, April 1827, p. 189. See also *Asiatic Journal*, April 1827.

21-22 John Bull 30. 11. 1825, *Oriental Herald*, June 1826, p. 567; *Columbian Press Gazette* 10. 1. 1826 (Note 19 above), etc; Jogunnouth Mugmoodvre, letter January (?) 1826, Chapter 9, note 8.

23 Bishop Heber, quoted in Ramkrishna Mukherjee, *The Rise and Fall of the East India Company*, 1973, p. 379.

24 Lord John Russell, 28 2. 1828, quoted in Elie Halevy, *The Liberal Awakening*, p. 296.

25 *Bengal Chronicle*, July 26-31, 1827.

26 Memorial against the 1828 Press Regulation, to the King in Council, mid 1828.

27 Rinehart, *Canada*, p. 216.

28 Calcutta letter, 8. 7. 1827, *Oriental Herald*, Feb. 1828, p. 234.

29 Rammohun Roy, letters 28. 11. 1827, 8. 12. 1827.

30 Elie Halevy, *The Liberal Awakening*, p. 268.

31 Rammohun Roy, letter 18. 8. 1828, to John Crawford, emissary sent by the 'Calcutta Parliament' to London.—*RmRoy Works*, Pt. III, pp. 102, 108.

32 *John Bull* on the Indian Press, 20. 5. 1826, quoted in *Asiatic Journal*, July-Dec. 1826, pp. 502, 503, 505, 595.

- 38 Jeremy Bentham, letter 1828 (?), to Rammohun Roy, S. D. Collet, *Rammohun Roy...*, 1962 ed., p. 488.
- 34 Halevy (Note 30 above), p. 244.
- 35 *ibid.*, p. 184.
- 36 *ibid.*, p. 246.
- 37 Rammohun Roy, letter 9. 10. 1827, *Works* Pt. III, p. 98.
- 38 See Chapters 3 and 4.
- 39 James Sutherland, *Reminiscences*, *India Gazette*, Feb. 18, 1884, *Calcutta Review*, Vol. 57, No. 1, p. 59.
- 40 (J. H. Harington's son-in-law) Dr. Muston tried to run a paper with the assets of the *Calcutta Journal*; the name first chosen, *The British Lion*. Eventually he ran for some time a paper called *The Scotsman in the East*,—*Asiatic Journal*, Feb. 1826, pp. 251-5.
- 41 Note 39 above.
- 42 *British Parliamentary Papers*, East India Company Affairs, Colonies, 1831—32, East India. Vol. 5. Evidences, James Sutherland, heard on 16. 8. 1832.
- 43 *Oriental Herald*, April 1827.
- 44 Chapter 9, note 8.
- 45 Note 43 above.
- 46 Re. Theodore Dickens as editor of the *Bengal Hurkaru* in 1825,—*Asiatic Journal*, Feb. 1826, p. 234. That James Sutherland was editor of the *Bengal Hurkaru* in 1827, is well known.
- 47 *Bengal Chronicle*, 8. 1. 1828, p. 23.
- 48 *Asiatic Journal*, July—Dec. 1827, p. 236.
- 49 The particulars given are from *Bengal Chronicle*, *Bengal Hurkaru* and *Oriental Herald*, and from *Calcutta Chronicle* as reproduced in the other three papers.

Ch. 12: THE SECOND PLUNGE

Of the later finds, one is the discovery that Calcuttans had not raised objections when new taxes had been imposed on them in the past, for instance when the House Tax was introduced.

Another is that as late as 1823, several of the sponsors of the 1827 No-tax campaign had specifically declared

that they enjoyed "the same civil and religious liberty which is enjoyed in England *without being subjected to such heavy taxation as presses upon the people there.*—(Press Memorial to Supreme Court, 31. 3. 1823.) If these people objected to being taxed only on one solitary occasion, and on that occasion claimed political rights as a price for the same, it is reasonable to assume that it was a political move par excellence.

1 See Chapter 6, page 45.

2 Calcutta letter quoted in *Oriental Herald*, Oct. 1827, p. 14.

3 *Bengal Chronicle*, 19. 1. 1827.

4 Calcutta legal opinion, *Oriental Herald*, Oct. 1827, p. 9.

5 *Ridgway's Pamphlet*, *Oriental Herald*, Jan. 1828.

6 Note 3 above.

7 Calcutta letter, *Oriental Herald*, Oct. 1827.

8-12 Note 5 above.

13 Archdeacon (later Bishop) Daniel Corrie, letter 4. 11. 1830, his *Biography*.

14 Note 8 above.

15 Calcutta letter, 8. 7. 27, *Oriental Herald*, Feb. 1828.

16 *Oriental Herald*, Jan. 1828.

17 *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*, *Calcutta Journal*, 1822 ; *Brief Remarks...rights of females*, 1821-22 ; *Memorials against 1828 Press Regulation*, 1828.

18 Lt. Col. Fitzclarence, *Journal of a Route Across India*, entry under "Nagpore 5. 1. 1818."

19 Archdeacon Daniel Corrie. letters 4. 11. 1830, 30. 4. 1831, his *Biography*.

20 Chapter 9, note 2.

21 For W. Adam, Collet : Rammohun Roy : for J. Sutherland, *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, Sept. 1832, *Asiatic Journal*, Nov. 1834.

22 John Bull, quoted in *Bengal Hurkaru Bengal Chronicle*, 25. 5. 1827.

23 *Calcutta Chronicle*, *Oriental Herald*, Oct.-Dec. 1827, pp. 845-7.

24 When the Government banned the meeting proposed to be held at the Town-Hall on 17. 5. 1827.

25 House of Commons Debate 7. 6. 1825, C. W. W. Wynn, speech,—*Asiatic Journal*, July 1825. p. 105.

26 W. B. Bayley, report 10. 10. 1822, *Modern Review*, Nov. 1828.

27 James Silk Buckingham, *Oriental Herald*, Nov. 1827, pp 887-8.

28 *Bengal Chronicle*, 18. 5. 1827, p. 748.

Ch. 18 : WORDS, DEEDS

Amongst later finds are certain letters of Archdeacon (later Bishop) Daniel Corrie. Some of his letters,—those dated 4. 11. 1830 and 30. 4. 1831,—have already been made use of in the Text. Several others, relevant to our study, have now come to light. In an 1822 letter he is found to have been much annoyed at the activities of certain “deistical politicians”. In another, undated, Corrie observed that the “first petition for a Colonial Council would probably come from thence [the Hindu College.]” His 24. 2. 1831 letter has : “The school master [Rammohun Roy] is abroad, but, as I have stated before, the influence at work in the *Reformer* and all in that connection is anti-English.”

All these letters are to be found in Bishop Corrie's *Biography* by his brothers.

1 Chapter 12, note 18.

2 *ibid.*

3 *The Golden Vase*, text from Bradley-Birt's edition of Derosio's Poems, 1923.

4 Chapter 12, note 19.

5 *Govt. Gazette*, 14. 2. 1828.

6 *Oriental Herald*, August 1826, reaching India around February 1827.

7 James Mill's *History*, started in 1806, completed in 1817.

8-10 W. B. Bayley, report 10. 10. 1822. *Modern Review*, Nov. 1928.

11-i *Mirat ul-Akhbar*, No. 5, *Calcutta Journal*, 10. 5. 1822.

ii *Akhbar Serampore*.—B. N. Banerji, *Bangla Samayik Patra*, p. 71.

12 Letters, speeches of Sir C. E. Metcalfe, Sir John Malcolm, Lord Amherst (or his spokesman.)—See ours page 62.

13 Ch. 4, pp. 88-85.

14 *Asiatic Journal*, July—Dec. 1827, pp. 469-90.

15 *Oriental Herald*, Jan. 1827, p. 7.

16 *Govt.* letter 31. 5. 1827 cancelling the licence, and Rev. W. Adam's reply.

17 Collet : Rammohun Roy, p. 215.

18 *Oriental Herald*, Sept. 1824, p. 98.

19 *Calcutta Journal*, May 1828.

- 20 *Brahmical Magazine*, No. IV, 15. 11. 1828, *Works*, Pt. II, p. 189.
- 21 Elie Halevy, *The Liberal Awakening 1815-1830*.
- 22 Collet : Rammohun Roy, pp. 218-9.
- 23 See pp. 118, 125, 126,
- 24 *Bengal Chronicle*, April 1827, many entries.
- 25 *Bengal Chronicle*, May 25, 1827, p. 785.
- 26 *Asiatic Journal*, April 1826, p. 523, Oct. 1827. p. 490.

Ch. 14 : THE RUNNING STORY

Of the later finds one is that the year 1827 is an out-caste. Nobody credits it with anything. Our history books never use the figure '1827'. Actually, as we find it, this year was of great significance in India's history. —It was during this year that Indians for the first time participated in political meetings, raised political cries, formed political organizations, challenged the political privileges of the Governor General, colleagueed with (some of) the British to fight (some of) the British.

Another later find is that a Calcutta paper, the *Bengal Hurkaru*, openly threatened to bribe the British Parliament into conceding political (or other) rights.—“The present rotten borough system offers us the means of being efficiently represented in Parliament. ... [We can] purchase for us members enough to make us heard and respected.” —Quoted in *Asiatic Journal*, July—Dec. 1827, p. 264.

Another later find is a directive from London banning the holding of 'political' meetings, circulated by the Indian authorities on 9 April 1827. It reads: “The following extract from a general letter from the Hon'ble the Court of Directors dated 23 June 1826 is published for general information :

“We direct on receipt of this despatch that public notice be issued forbidding under pain of our high displeasure

any public assemblage either of our own servants or of private merchants, traders, or other inhabitants whatsoever without first obtaining the sanction of the Government. ... in order that you may have it in your power to judge of the propriety of allowing the question that may be proposed to be agitated ..." — *Bentinck Correspondence*, pp. 1415—20.

It means two things,—(a) that at the very time when London sent its approval of the proposed Tax, it sent this additional gagging order; and (b) that Calcuttans convened the meeting challenging the Governor General's power to levy tax, with full knowledge of this all-comprehensive 'no meeting without sanction' order.

1 Govt. letter 8. 12. 1826, to Monte D' Rozario, *Oriental Herald*, May 1827, pp. 586-8.

2 Monte D' Rozario, letter 9. 12. 1826 to Govt.—*ibid*; also Govt. letter 1. 6. 1827, to Rev. William Adam; *Bengal Past and Present*, 1914, Vol. I, pp. 251—72.

3 *ibid*.

4 *Oriental Herald*, Jan. 1827, pp. 5-7.

5 S. D. Collet, *Raja Rammohun Roy*, 1962 ed., p. 215.

6 *Bengal Chronicle*, 19. 1. 1827.

7 A. F. Salahuddin Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Changes in Bengal 1818—1835*, pp. 66, 67.

8 *Oriental Herald*, Sept. 1827, p. 582.

9 *Calcutta Monthly Journal Bengal Chronicle*, May 1827, many entries.

10 *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, April 1827, p. 104.

11 *Bengal Chronicle*, 27. 4. 1827, p. 635.

12 *ibid*, p. 637.

13 Quoted in *Oriental Herald*, Oct. 1827, pp. 350-1.

14 *Bengal Chronicle*, 8. 5. 1827.

15 *ibid*, 15. 5. 1827, p. 354.

16 *ibid*, 18. 5. 1827, p. 748 Date of Notice, 15. 5. 1827.

17 Calcutta letters summarised, *Oriental Herald*, Jan. 1828, pp. 11, 12.

18 Govt. Gazette, quoted in *Bengal Hurkaru*, 30. 5. 1827; *John Full*, quoted in *Bengal Hurkaru*, 29. 5. 1827 and in *Bengal Chronicle* 25. 5. 1827.

19 *Bengal Chronicle* 1 (or 2.) 6. 1827, p. 880.

20 *Bengal Chronicle*, 25. 5. 1827, p. 785.

21 *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, May 1827, p. 121.

22 *ibid*, p. 122.

23 Calcutta legal opinion, 1. 8. 1827, *Oriental Herald*, Oct. 1827, pp. 9-14.

24 *ibid*, p. 14.

John Palmer, letter 5. 7. 1827, ("If British principles of taxation are introduced, British principles of Government and British privileges ought to a company.") - *Oriental Herald*, Jan. 1828, p. 151 ; Calcutta letter 8. 7. 1827, *Oriental Herald*, Feb. 1828, p. 284. Also *Bengal Chronicle* and *Fengal Hurkaru* July, August 1827, covering the registration of the Stamp (Duties) Regulation by the Calcutta Supreme Court.

26 *Fengal Chronicle*, 25. 5. 1827, p. 785.

27 *Govt. Gazette*, quoted in *Bengal Hurkaru*, 30. 5. 1827.

28 *Bengal Chronicle*, 25. 5. 1827, pp. 784-5 ; also 1 (or 2.) 6. 1827. p. 828.

29 *Asiatic Journal*. July - Dec. 1827. pp. 489-90.

30 James Sutherland, evidence before the Parliamentary Committee, 16. 8. 1832.

31 *Fengal Chronicle*, 1 (or 2.) 6. 1827, p. 828.

32 Calcutta letter, late May 1827, *Oriental Herald*, Nov. 1827. p. 364.

33 *Asiatic Journal*, Jan. 1828.

34 *Bengal Chronicle*, 8. 7. 1827.

35 Calcutta correspondent, *Asiatic Journal*, Jan. 1828, p. 78.

36 *Bengal Chronicle*, 2. 8. 1827, p. 179.

37 *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, July 1827.

38 Note 36 above.

39 Chapter 15, pages 187-9.

Ch. 15 : THE CAMPAIGN

Of the later finds one is a letter of Lord Bentinck to Chairman William Astell, written on the second day of the Supreme Court hearings, *i. e.* ; on 14. 8. 1828.—C. H. Philips, *The Correspondence of Lord William Bentinck 1828-1835*, p. 64. It shows, *inter alia*, how 'difficult' some of our witnesses are.

According to the Court proceedings (ours p. 139) the defence plea included the stand that "*If then this Stamp Duty has not been imposed by our consent...., I say it is illegal.*". Other points, *e. g.*, that the Regulation was inaptly worded, were also raised ; but all those were definitely dwarfed by the plea of 'no taxation without our consent'.

This case was thus reported by India's most responsible officer of the time, Governor General Lord Bentinck, to his London superiors; "A question ... respecting the stamp regulation was decided yesterday in the Supreme Court against the Government. The information was against the house of Alexander & Co. for accepting a bill of exchange not drawn upon stamped paper. The defence was that in the particular clause of the regulation applying to this question, the word 'bill of exchange' is not expressed. The word therein used is 'obligation', always understood in law to mean contracts under seal. The judges differed in opinion and the jury availed themselves of this difference to give a verdict in favour of the defendants. It is thought that under all circumstances the jury would have given the same verdict." Not a single word about the (in India's case) revolutionary plea that all taxes imposed without the taxpayer's consent were illegal! Unbelievable, but true.

This letter, (there are many of this kind) shows how unsafe it is to write history on the basis of even Governors General's 'private & confidential' letters.

This letter was from an officer of the stature of Governor General Lord Bentinck to one of the eminence of Chairman Astell. And anybody taking his cue from this letter would justly conclude that the said Supreme Court case had no political implication at all. And that appears to have been the conclusion of all our historians. The result is that the world has never paid any attention to that case.

Now listen to what Astell wrote back on receipt of this letter: "Let me express a hope that the Supreme Court may not continue to be overstocked with that pest of society, attorneys who now swarm at Calcutta to a number double what is required, and that your Lordship will also, as far as in your power lies, prevent the useless admission of barristers at your presidency."—*Bentinck Correspondence*, p. 144.

It is a certainty that while sending that 'private' letter to Astell, Bentinck had sent another letter, perhaps marked 'doubly private' (which the recipient had kept suppressed, or destroyed, after perusal,) with remarks about the political implications of the said Supreme Court trial. If Astell had received supplementary information from sources other than Bentinck, he would have called for Bentinck's comments thereon." He did nothing of the kind.

Another significant find is that in the matter of misrepresenting situations Bentinck the Governor General of India was no exception. Lord Dalhousie, the Governor General of the Canadas for example wrote in 1827: "The contented happiness of the people of Lower Canada is almost proverbial", in an effort to discount the importance of the political agitation he had aroused against himself". (The quote and comment are from H. T. Manning, *The Revolt of French Canada 1800-1835*, p. 13.)

1 ... "I ... have relinquished the publication of this paper ... [inter alia] As it is written :

Abrooe kih bu-sud Khoon i jigur dust dihud

Bu-oomed-i kurum-e, kha'juh, bu-durban mu furosh.

(The respect which is purchased with a hundred drops of heart's blood, do not thou, in the hope of a favor, commit to the mercy of a porter.)'—English translation, *Calcutta Journal* 10. 4. 1823, S. D. Collet, *Raja Rammohun Roy*, 1962 ed., pp. 455-6.

2i *Bengal Chronicle*, 19. 1. 1827.

2ii *Calcutta Chronicle*, soon after 26. 4. 1827, *Oriental Herald*, Nov. 1827.

3 *Bengal Chronicle*, 13. 5. 1827, p. 720.

4 *ibid.*

5 *ibid.*, 15. 5. 1827, p. 750.

6 Chapter 11, note 31,

7 *Bengal Hurkaru*, *Bengal Chronicle*, 25. 10. 1827, p. 620.

8 House of Commons Debate 22. 8. 1827, Joseph Hume and Sir Charles Forbes, speeches, *Oriental Herald*, April 1827, pp. 179-181, 190. Also see *Asiatic Journal* April 1827.

9 *Oriental Herald*, April-June 1827, p. 614.

10 "Summary history" in *Oriental Herald*, Jan. 1828.

11 Calcutta letter, *Oriental Herald*, March 1828.

12 *ibid.*, April-June 1828, p. 344.

- 18 Note 10 above.
- 14 Note 11 above.
- 15 *Bengal Chronicle*, 27. 5. 1827, p. 801.
- 16 Note 12 above.
- 17 *Asiatic Journal*, April 1826, p. 528.
- 18 Calcutta letter 20. 9. 1825, *Murray's Representative*, 4. 8. 1826, *Oriental Herald*, April 1826.
- 19 Note 10 above.
- 20 *Bengal Hurkaru*, 29. 5. 1827.
- 21 *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, August 1828, pp. 81-127 ; Nov. 1828, pp. 168-70.
- 22 See page 128.
- 23 See Chapter 16.

Ch. 16 : THE CAPITULATION

In this chapter we have reached the limits of our audacity. There are in circulation beliefs of Lord Bentinck himself to the effect that if there was at all any political agitation in India at the time, it was of little consequence. As regards the Calcutta-centred agitation, Bentinck is known to have referred to Bengal politicians as "a mere flock of sheep good only for their valuable fleeces and having no political or military character whatever." (cf. Dr. Rosselli, *Bentinck* p. 193.) Anybody, weighing our assessments against those of Lord Bentinck, would, quite justifiably, show us the door, unless we can establish that *Bentinck (and his associates) deliberately misrepresented the situation*. Can we do so ? Here are some of the pointers.

The authorities in London and Calcutta appear to have carried on consultation with each other through official correspondence, which were almost totally preserved, and through unofficial correspondence, which were almost totally suppressed, destroyed. We made a guess like this when considering the correspondence exchanged between

Calcutta and London during the Amherst years (1823-28), *vide* pages 167,168. That guess became a certainty when we took stock of the correspondence exchanged during the Bentinck years (1828-35). In this examination *The Correspondence of Lord William Cavendish Bentinck 1828-1835*, recently published by Prof. C. H. Philips, has been of great help to us; and we take this opportunity of acknowledging our debt to him.

Lord Bentinck got his appointment around May 1827; he sailed for India in January (or February) 1828; he took charge of India on 4 July 1828; he left India on 20 March 1835. Irrespective of whether or not India experienced any political movement during the 1820s, England, including Bentinck and his political associates, definitely heard or read during the period April 1827 to March 1835,—that (a) facing deficit budgets the Indian Government had passed a new tax regulation in December 1826; (b) certain Europeans with close native connection (*e. g.* Rev. William Adam) had openly raised the point of 'no taxation without representation'; (c) hundreds of non-official Europeans, the eternal 'thorn in the flesh' of the EIC people, had been, at least since April 1827, challenging the authority of the Local Government (even with the support of their superiors in England,) to levy taxes; (d) a large number of native banians, merchants, landholders and several European merchants, barristers, planters had convened public meetings, in open defiance of government orders, to examine the extent of the rights and powers of the Governor General in Council; (e) hundreds of them, assembled at a public meeting, had formed a body to get the Governor General in Council deprived of one of his most important privileges, that of levying taxes; (f) a sum of £ 10,000 had been raised to send emissaries to England for lobbying amongst anti-EIC groups there; (g) their activities had been getting wide publicity in England. (Ours pages 129—140.)

And we get from the recently published *Bentinck Correspondence* that, during the years 1828-35, Amherst, Astell, Auber, Ellenborough, Grant, Marjoribank, Mill, Ravenshaw, Shaftesbury, Wynn, etc. in England and Bayley, Grey, Mackenzie, Malcolm, Metcalfe, Ryan, Smith, Trevelyan, Young etc. in India, wrote more than 1000 pages of this size to Lord Bentinck briefing him, directing him, asking for his views, about hundreds of things. And yet we find that none of them ever penned the words 'Stamp Duties' or ever said anything even about that eternal 'thorn in the flesh' the non-official Europeans *then raising* political cries.—Not even when Ellenborough went so far as to warn Bentinck that as a European settled in India, "he would become attached to his possessions and renounce England; it is against that renunciation of England that we must always guard", did Ellenborough find it topical to refer to the political cries *already being raised* in India by the European residents there!

When half-batta measures worth £ 19,000 a year in possible savings were found to be in jeopardy, they wrote thousands of words on the subject. They wrote not a single word when tax measures worth about £ 500,000 a year got imperilled following the stand of 'no taxation without representation' taken in a Supreme Court trial (ours pages 137—40.) Even when both the Chairman of the Court of Directors and the President of the Board of Control made it clear to the Governor General that "in future the Company in India must pay its way or risk early abolition", and repeatedly harped on the theme of cutting down expenses to produce a balanced budget, nobody is found to have ever made a single reference to the anti-tax developments mentioned above. One would think that, till then, the world had never heard of an alternative method of producing balanced budgets,—that of raising additional revenue. The result has been that the Stamp (Duties) Regulation, which consumed hundreds, perhaps

thousands, of pages of contemporary periodicals in the years 1827-29, has found no mention in the Index of a book, 1456 pages long, devoted to the correspondence of the man who ran the Indian administration from July 1828 onwards.

Since it is literally impossible to believe such reticence about such matters in such circumstances on the part of such people, we are inexorably driven to the other possibility,—that all references to politically sensitive matters were made in a separate set of communications, which were then kept carefully segregated, and which as Prof. Philips' magnum opus shows, have not yet come to light. The two channels of communication, taken jointly, gave one picture; either of them separately gave a different picture. We claim that the officially communicated picture, taken singly, was false.

This strategy has a long history. We are here taking notice of the 1820 developments only. In his book *The East India Company 1784-1834*, Prof. Philips has given us what happened when Lord Hastings "began assiduously to cultivate the friendship of the leading Directors, no doubt hoping like some of his predecessors to play off the Court against the Board" and took to the practice of writing private letters to each succeeding Chairman. George Canning, the then President of the Board of Control, objected to this practice, "and Pattison the Chairman (of the Court of Directors) warned Hastings [not that he should stop writing private letters but] that these private letters should neither be referred to in the official correspondence..."

Prof. Philips has taken notice of the difficulty and the embarrassment which ensued when the Court clashed with the Board. During the period under our study, thanks to Joseph Hume, Leicester Stanhope etc., the Court and the Board jointly clashed with the anti-establishment groups. While Bentinck was being briefed for his second Indian assignment, the Court and the Board were being frequently

badgered with demands for making public this or that part of their correspondence with their executives in India. Bentinck was briefed in this respect also. We find him writing to Marjoribank on 14. 8. 1828 : "I have acted upon *your advice* of writing shortly to the Chairman the news of the day disclaiming for my letters all official responsibility and leaving to his decision to communicate as much or as little of their contents to the Court as he might think proper." Marjoribank wrote back on 5. 5. 1829 : "Nothing could be better taken or received than your private communication to the Chairman. ... It is a good rule, but if I may be permitted to suggest to your Lordship, in practice I would adhere only to that which has taken place in lieu of stating what you may have in contemplation..." (Incidentally, were those very special letters kept for perusal of the wider public in later times ? We doubt very much. Every clime and every time no doubt has its Richard Nixons, but they are not many.)

That sometimes at least Bentinck conveyed a patently false picture even in his private communications has been discussed earlier—*vide* pp. 176, 177. In assessing Bentinck's 14. 8. 1828 private letter, which he addressed to Astell on the second day of the Supreme Court hearing of the Tax Evasion case, we can do no better than quote what Prof. Philips said in commenting on President Wynn's statement on the 1824 Barrackpur Mutiny : "Wynn must either have been misinformed or he deliberately lied." (—Philips, *The East India Company 1784-1834*, p. 256.)

Of the other finds of this type, one is a minute of Lord Bentinck dated 6. 1. 1829. According to this minute, "Whenever the natives have come forward upon any public questions as upon the stamp and jury regulations, they have been considered rather the puppets of the European part of the society than the originators of the petitions," (—*The Bentinck Correspondence* pp. 136-7.) If Bentinck got it right, at least the native content of the 1827-28 agitation

was of little consequence. Looked at closely, this assessment of Bentinck shows (not that he did not get it right, but) that for some reason or other, he deliberately chose to misrepresent it. Bentinck, in 1829, knew that Radhakanta Deb and all his native associates were, in 1827-28, aware that (not Palmers and Youngs but) Amhersts and Combermeres, had at their disposal the law, to publicly flog any native (Regulation IX of 1807), and the law to keep in detention without trial any native till he died (Regulation III of 1818), and the privilege of bestowing Rajabahadurships on any of the natives, at their pleasure. If in such circumstances Radhakanta Deb and 67 other native banians, merchants, landholders had joined hands, not with Amhersts and Combermeres but with Palmers and Youngs, they definitely did not act as puppets. That species of rational bipeds never prefers Palmers to Amhersts. What Radhakanta Debs did in 1827-28,—circulating the view that neither the Local Government nor its London superiors had any right to levy taxes and that at a time when these authorities were trying frantically to raise additional revenue by taxation, was treason deserving extreme penalty.

We have at one place remarked that letters containing references to politically sensitive matters look like having been generally kept segregated by their senders and recipients. Bentinck letters appear to have undergone an additional screening out. We get from the *British Dictionary of National Biography*: "It should be mentioned that a collection of Bentinck's papers is understood to have been arranged by Lady William Bentinck after her husband's death with a view to the publication of a biography, but the intention has not been carried out and the collection has apparently disappeared."

In consideration of this last mentioned development, and the other circumstances discussed above, we have, in our study, given preference to Bentinck as he acted over

Bentinck as he talked. And our conclusion is that, he then looked like having 'capitulated.'

1 Govt. Secretariat Notification, 23. 2. 1829, inviting suggestions for the better running of the country, *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, March 1829, p. 36.

2 British Parliamentary Papers, Colonies, East India, Vol. 7, Session 1831-32, p. 844.

3 "But for Portland he [Bentinck] might easily have gone bankrupt... in the bad years around 1820. Even then needed the Governor Generalship to bail him out. ... 'I know not any good whatever, [wrote Bentinck to Verney, on 8. 7. 1827] except riches ... to be had in India.' "—John Rosselli, *Lord William Bentinck*.

4 Cf. Debates in connection with the renewal of the EIC Charter in 1833.

5 "Government sold Motie Musjid at Agra for Rs. 125,000 and it is now being pulled down. The Taj has also been offered for sale",—based on report in *Calcutta John Bull* 26. 7. 1831.

"The Government have sold the Taj" to a Bengalee, for assembly at Brindavan.—*Calcutta Monthly Journal*, July 1831.

It was either an unfounded rumour; or, it was a case of cancelling the project later in view of public outcry against it.

6 Note 2 above; also, "Is there not ... imminent danger", said Lord Bentinck, "of our failure to realise [even] the income which is necessary to maintain the establishments required for] the protection and good government of the country ... ?"—Bentinck's Minute 30. 5. 1829.

7 *Asiatic Journal*, October 1827.

8 Chapter 15, note 13.

9 *Calcutta letter* 15. 8. 1827, *Oriental Herald*, Feb. 1828.

10 *John Bull*, *Asiatic Journal*, April 1826, p. 523.

11 *Asiatic Journal*, October 1827, p. 490.

12 *Ibid*.

13 Chapter 11, ours pages 87—89.

14 "The 5 percent loan has met with the same fate; with the 4 percent loan formerly attempted it has not succeeded." *Calcutta news* around July 1825,—*Oriental Herald*, Jan. 1826, p. 139. Also Jogunnath Mugmoovre, letter, Jan. (?) 1825, to President of the Board of Control, Ours Chapter 9, note 8.

15 O. H. Philips, *The East India Company* p. 262.

16 *John Bull*, *Asiatic Journal*, July—Dec. 1826, p. 595.

17 Sir John Malcolm, *Life in Dictionary of National Biography*.

18 *Ibid*.

19 In 1827—28 the collections amounted to: Bengal Rs. 4, 761, 390; Madras 931, 710, Bombay 865,103=6,058,203. In 1828—29, the collections were: Bengal 4, 389, 846; Madras 920, 590; Bombay 815, 494=5,625,930.

20 Note 1 above.

21 *Lords Com. Report, 1852-53, Trevelyan Evidence, Ans. to Q. 6870, A. F. Salahuddin Ahmed, Social Changes ... 1818-85, p. 8 ; Dr. J. Rosselli, Lord William Bentinck, passim.*

22 *EIO Debate 15, 4- 1838, Sir John Malcolm, speech, EIO Debates, p. 18.*

Ch. 17 : NOTES & REFERENCES

A lot more evidences have since come to light, are being processed, and will be accommodated in PART II now under preparation. Some of them are truly astounding and strain our capacity to believe to the breaking point. They show how Lord Bentinck more than retrieved his position *vis-a-vis* not only the constitutional agitation of the time but also several other types of anti-British activities, then raging in the country. His most spectacular achievement however was that he was able to sell a wrong image of himself and his time, which is not only still with us but is growing brighter and brighter with the passage of time.

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